

MINISTRY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH USING THE SYSTEMS APPROACH
OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY COUNSELING

A Professional Project
Presented to
the Faculty of the
School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Frances Marie Wiebenga

May 1991

This professional project, completed by

Frances Marie Wiebenga

*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty
of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

Faculty Committee

Alan H. Rhodes

Cornelia R. Rogers

May 13, 1991
Date

Alth. Moore
Dean

© 1991

Frances Marie Wiebenga

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT

MINISTRY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH USING THE SYSTEMS APPROACH
OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY COUNSELING

Frances Marie Wiebenga

A pastor in any local church setting is the leader of a large group of diverse people. In that situation, conflict often develops, or negative behavior makes the task of positive ministry more difficult than necessary. The systems approach to marriage and family counseling provides a framework within which the congregation is viewed as a whole, and the individual people and groups are looked at from the standpoint of their function and position in the congregation. This provides a positive context with which to approach the congregation at any time, but is especially helpful when a problem needs attention.

This study presents the situation at one local church over a total period of two years, with a three-month period during which specific interventions based on the systems approach were applied. Techniques from transgenerational and strategic therapeutic approaches to marriage and family counseling were used in two examples.

It was found that the systems approach provided a significant shift in perception about the congregation, which enabled the pastor to bring some positive action to a very difficult situation. In the two examples presented, change in the congregation which resulted from the interventions was clearly indicated, although difficult to measure.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Prof. Dan Rhoades and Prof. Cornish Rogers for their help in preparing this thesis. Their suggestions were invaluable, and have guided my thought processes in very helpful and constructive ways. Thanks is also due to Elaine Walker, the thesis secretary at the School of Theology at Claremont, who has been extremely thorough and helpful in her numerous readings of this paper.

I would also like to express my appreciation to The Rev. Mas Kawashima, Senior Pastor of West Los Angeles United Methodist Church, and all the members and friends at West Los Angeles UMC for their encouragement and support throughout the time I have been writing the results of this project.*

Most of all, I want to thank my family: my husband Paul Sanford and my children Benjamin and Grace-Elizabeth, for their patience and extra help at home during my years of study at Claremont, and my father- and mother-in-law, The Rev. Robert and Leone Sanford, for their help taking care of Benjamin and Grace-Elizabeth during vacations so that I would have time to write.

* West Los Angeles UMC is my present appointment, and is not the church in this study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acknowledgments	iii
Chapter	
1. Introduction	1
Problem Addressed by the Project	1
Thesis	3
Definition of Major Terms	3
Work Previously Done in the Field	6
Scope and Limitations of the Project	11
Procedure for Integration	11
Chapter Outlines	12
Summary	13
2. An Administrative Analysis of One Church	
Congregation	17
Purpose of this Chapter	17
Church Characteristics	17
Deacon Board	22
Trustee Board and Other Groups	23
Role of the Pastor	25
Celebrations and Special Days	27
Freedom	28

A Split Congregation	29
The Black Church as Family	30
Summary	33
3. Basic Concepts of the Systems Approach and One Church Congregation	37
Introduction	37
Basic Concepts	39
Identified Patient	39
Homeostasis (Balance)	40
Differentiation of Self	43
Extended Family Field	44
Emotional Triangle	47
Brief Therapy and Second Order Change	49
Summary	51
4. Ethical and Theological Considerations	54
The Purpose and Importance of this Chapter	54
Ethical Issues	55
Fair Exchange and Social Control	55
Fair Exchange	55
Social Control	57
Controlling Information	59
Role of the Therapist	60
Other Ethical Considerations	62
Manipulation	64
Values	68
Goals of Therapy and Ministry	73
Ethical Basis for Intervention in a Congregation	75
Summary	77

5. Application of the Systems Approach to the Church . . .	81
Approach 1: Transgenerational Therapy	81
Statement of the Problem	81
Past Attempted Solutions	81
Statement of Concrete Change Desired	83
Strategy	83
Report of this Strategy	83
Systems Analysis	86
Ethical Considerations	88
Evaluation and Conclusion	89
Approach 2: Strategic Therapy	90
Statement of the Problem	90
Background of the Problem	90
Analysis of the Problem	92
Statement of Change Desired	93
Past Attempted Solutions	93
First Attempted Solution	93
Second Attempted Solution	94
Systems Analysis	96
Evaluation	97
Summary	98
6. Conclusion	101
Implications for Use in the Local Church	101
Other Implications	102
Summary	104
Bibliography	106

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my nuclear family, my husband Paul Sanford and my children Benjamin and Grace-Elizabeth, for their continuing love and patience, and their whole-hearted encouragement and support.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Problem Addressed by the Project

In June 1987, I was appointed to an urban church with an average worship attendance of 50. I began work as pastor on July 1. I had not yet graduated from seminary, and it was my first appointment. Although I had worked in many situations prior to this appointment, and in the church for many years, this was my first experience being in charge of an entire organization.

The seminary had prepared pastors to preach, teach, theologize, and to do some basic counseling and pastoral care. We had studied polity and church administration enough to understand the functioning of the church and its structure. We had practiced weddings and funerals. We had practiced organizing and leading small groups and committees. We had initiated programs and worship services. All of these skills came fairly easily to me, and there were many resources to provide help when needed.

However, nothing had prepared me for some of the problems and behaviors which I encountered in this church setting. For a year I struggled with the situation. I attended several workshops, which were very helpful, especially Kennon Callahan's 12 Keys to an Effective Church.¹ I also attended a Walk to Emmaus weekend.² That weekend gave me a vision of what I wanted to happen in the church, and some spiritual resources and support which enabled me to continue in this difficult

assignment. All of this helped. However, I still did not have specific tools or strategies to understand and work with the specific situation in which I found myself in the local church.

It was when I began to study the systems theory of marriage and family counseling that it became possible for me to begin to make sense of the interactions within this particular church for the first time. Systems theory provided a way of thinking which enabled me to work positively within the situation. It enabled me to get out of identifying personalities as culprits, and to look at how persons within the church community functioned, and how the community as a whole functioned. It allowed me to work with parishoners who played the game of acuser/defender whenever difficulties arose in the church without getting stuck in one of those roles. The systems approach also allowed me to deal more positively with those who used tantrums or other irrational behavior to get their way.

A great "Aha" occurred with the realization that the good people were just as responsible for the interactions that occurred as the bad people--that the problems of the church were just as much theirs as anyones, and that their acceptance of harmful behavior was just as harmful to the overall healthy functioning of the church system as was the overt negative behavior. With that realization, it was tempting to give up, for it meant that not just one or two people were the cause of the difficulties in the church, it was everyone! That also meant I had no ally in the church -- no one who at that time looked at the church with an understanding that we were all a part of any problems. There seemed to be no way to bring about real and lasting change, even when a problem had been identified.

Systems theory gives a necessary theoretical basis and context from which problem solving and needed change can be effectively introduced into a group such as a congregation. It also provides a basis from which to deal with difficult and irrational behavior, some of which is present in most congregations. Systems theory never blames or looks at personality as the cause of problems or problem behavior, but always deals with the total organization and with how all the people in the group interact with each other; it is more how people function and interact together as a group that determines how effective the organization will be, and not on individual personalities within the group.

The systems approach also might be the theoretical basis for bringing about growth to churches which have been declining in membership, or are stable-and-declining.³ This is a problem in at least some congregations within most mainline protestant churches today.

Thesis

It is my thesis that the systems theory of marriage and family counseling and the principles of brief therapy can provide the theoretical basis for effective problem solving and for bringing about needed change in a local church congregation.

Definition of Major Terms

Terms which will be helpful for this study are:

Brief therapy: This is a strategic, problem solving therapy based on the work of psychaitrist Milton Erickson and developed by Jay Haley. Therpists using the techniques of brief therapy seek to find ways of bringing about change in people or groups in a short period of time (three months or less).

Circular feedback loop: "Relationship of two or more events in which information flows in a circular pattern."⁴ This is typical of cliques within groups in which several people all consult or call one another to share information, but do not go outside their own small group to find someone else's opinion or thoughts. It is the basis for the statements often heard in churches, "Everybody thinks..." or "Everybody knows..." when everybody is the person's two or three best friends, all of whom have reinforced one opinion.

First-order change: "An adjustment in the system to maintain stability without changing the structure of the system or the way it maintains stability."⁵ This is change which is brought about from within the thought patterns of the system, which only perpetuates the patterns already present in the functioning of the system. An example might be that in trying to bring about change within a church congregation a new pastor will be brought in. However, if the pattern is to bring in a new pastor each year, that is no change at all but an integral part of how the system functions. A real change might be to keep a pastor more than one year.

Homeostasis: "The tendency of a system to seek stability and equilibrium."⁶ Families, organizations and groups tend to maintain balance and equilibrium in order to function. If this balance is upset, the organization becomes unstable. Often, this is the best time to introduce a new element which may lead to structural change. It is more difficult to introduce change when the organization is functioning smoothly. This is why changes may be more easily made at transition times, such as when children leave for college, or when a new pastor comes to a church.

Identified patient: "The symptom bearer or family member identified as having the problem."⁷ In larger groups, we often hear the statement, "If it weren't for so-and-so I could..." or "If it weren't for so-and-so things would be different." So-and-so is the identified patient, the scapegoat for the person speaking not taking charge of their own life and bearing the responsibility for doing what they probably could and should do.

In a church, the person blamed for the church not growing may be functioning as the identified patient, allowing the others in the groups to avoid taking responsibility for what happens in the church. In this case, the identified patient functions as the scapegoat, bearing the frustration and conflict of the entire organization.

Problem-solving therapy: Therapy that seeks to reduce general complaints to a definable problem to which a specific solution can be applied.

Second-order change: "A change in the structure and functioning of a system and the way the system maintains stability."⁸ This kind of change often involves redefinition of terms. For example, if a church member complains that he is always down at the church doing some sort of church work and that he has done it for years, he speaks from a martyrs point of view which evokes sympathy. If, instead, someone replies that it must have given him great satisfaction to be the one person who has been trustworthy enough to do the tasks mentioned, the situation has been redefined from one of hardship to one in which the person is praised for being trustworthy.

Strategic therapy: Therapy in which the therapist takes an active and directive role in what happens in the interaction between therapist

and client. It is directly counter to the therapies which are passive or which use mainly reflective techniques.

Systems theory: A theory of counseling which looks at the entire family or group and the interaction between members, rather than at one identified patient or problem person.

System: "A set of interrelated elements that make up a whole."⁹ A system can be any grouping which habitually functions together, such as a family, an office staff, a business, or a church.

System-maintained symptoms: "Symptoms in a family member that are perpetuated by conditions in the family system."¹⁰ Since a system moves toward homeostasis, often all the behavior and structures within the system serve to keep it in balance. That means that even negative or seemingly harmful behavior can be behaviors which maintain the homeostatic condition of the group, and even those who profess to desire change unconsciously work to maintain the status quo.

Triangulation: "The tendency for two people who are in conflict to involve a third person or entity in order to reduce the stress in the dyad."¹¹ It is often said that love relationships come in triangles. It is only a small jump away to realize that all human relationships come in triangles. That is, often two parents and a child form a triad when the parents argue over the child to avoid confronting each other about their own issues, or two parents and one in-law (the proverbial mother-in-law) form a triangle when the issues of the in-law can keep the couple in a homeostatic state of warfare and disagreement.

Work Previously Done in the Field

Jay Haley, in Problem-Solving Therapy, makes several references to the applicability of systems theory to organizations. References are

made to the functioning of hierarchies within organizations and the sequences of decision-making within the organization:

An organization is in trouble when coalitions occur across levels of a hierarchy, particularly when these coalitions are secret. . . . When such a coalition happens occasionally it is a minor matter, but when sequences of this kind become organized so that they repeat and repeat, the organization is in trouble and the participants will experience subjective distress.¹²

Thus, the sequence of decision making is important to analyze in any organization, and appropriate action taken to insure that it follows the hierarchical order of that organization.

Although the family is the basic unit in family systems therapy, Fish, Weakland and Segal give strong indications that brief therapy can be applied to organizations and larger systems in the concluding chapter of The Tactics of Change: Doing Therapy Briefly. They state that they are "looking at human problems in general...in terms of ordinary human interaction, and at the ways in which such interaction may work out for the better or for the worse."¹³ As this statement implies, the position stands not only for those problems usually labeled psychaitric, but also any human behavior, including that which might be termed difficult or irrational.

Other brief therapists also believe that their general views about problem formation and problem resolution "might usefully be applied to a variety of nonpsychaiatric problems--at least conceptually and, we would hope, ultimately in practice."¹⁴ In generalizing to larger systems, Fish, Weakland and Segal apply their theory to several distinct types of problems: "(1) difficult behaviors, (2) somatic clinical problems, and (3) organizational problems."¹⁵

Every pastor in the Protestant denominations with whom I have spoken about this has encountered something which could be labeled

difficult behavior at least occasionally, and often constantly. This is therefore a pertinent area to explore in applying systems brief therapy to the church.

The second area mentioned, somatic illness and disease, does not directly concern the topic of systems and the church. However, mention also must be made that this area of research is very new, and that possibilities for many groups center around an approach concerned with interaction and attempted solutions of disease. This may eventually be the theoretical basis for explorations in the area of healing and how faith and religious belief affect health and wellness.

The third category directly concerns difficult behaviors in larger systems, an area directly applicable to the larger system of the organized church. Brief therapists have explored what makes effective leadership, and how meetings may be run most effectively. The answer for these therapists lies not in exploring individual personalities or personality conflicts, but is one of how people of function within the system or organization and the qualities and function of a leader who leads effectively. These proposals are not presented as new, easy solutions to old problems. They are presented as an alternate way of thinking about the entire system and the problems of human behavior which are encountered within them. There is no claim that the application will be easy or automatic in actual practice with specific cases. The same obstacles to treatment which occur in families may be present in larger organizations. Problems and attempted solutions may be presented in unclear ways. Goals may be grandiose and unrealizable. People within the organization may cling tenaciously to attempted solutions which are ineffective.¹⁶ However, it is hoped that this

approach may be effective in spite of possible drawbacks, and that it at least will give a perspective from which positive actions may result.

Haley also states that for change to take place, there are steps through which the change occurs. Instead of going directly from a dysfunctional system to a functional system, there will be an interim step of a secondary dysfunctional state. "[T]he first step should be to create a different form of abnormality."¹⁷ Thus, interventions may not immediately provide a well-functioning system, but be devised to intentionally go through an intermediate dysfunctional stage.

The concept of stages is important for organizational work, for it gives permission to give directives that lead to a secondary dysfunctional system, before the desired form of the system is reached.

This is significant for any organization, where one's job may rest on keeping the organization running smoothly. The level of discontent may at first rise if steps are taken to resolve a problem, before the final resolution occurs. It would be important to have all the management and people taking responsibility for the organization educated to the systems approach and the steps which might occur as change progresses.

Especially in the church today, where a Bishop may remove a pastor if there are too many complaints, the process of resolution may never reach the final stage and the problem recur endlessly. This seems to be the case in churches which have a history of problems where the congregation complains to the bishop or other high official, resulting in subsequent removal of the pastor. In order to break this sequence, there must be unequivocal support from the church hierarchy for those giving directives and interventions which apply to the the problems of

the church if those interventions are to bear fruit, and allow the church to progress to a more functional state.

One of the most helpful theories underlying the systems approach was proposed by Paul Watzlawick, one of the pioneers of brief therapy. This is the concept of first and second order change, which has already been mentioned.¹⁸ It is possible that the concept of second order change may be a key factor in unlocking the homeostatic condition of stable or stable-and-declining churches to produce a climate in which church growth can occur. This is a vital area in mainline denominations which are concerned over the loss of membership.

It is also possible that if the pastor is aware of his or her position within the system, that pastor may be the agent of second order change.

Edwin H. Friedman has been working with systems theory and family therapy, and has applied its principles to his work as a rabbi in a parish setting. Using an intergenerational approach, with relational triangles and differentiation of the self as his key concepts, Friedman has presented a forceful statement which shows that the theories presented can work successfully in a congregational system.

His basic thesis is that

all clergymen and clergywomen, irrespective of faith, are simultaneously involved in three distinct families whose emotional forces interlock: the families within the congregation, our congregations, and our own [families]. . . . Unresolved issues in any one of them can produce symptoms in the others, and increased understanding of any one creates more effective functioning in all three.¹⁹

Friedman explores the ideas of resistance for those in leadership positions in all organizations, and the position of the clergy within the system, especially in relation to triangling.

Friedman also places family therapy "in the service of heightening

spirituality rather than creating one more burdensome subspeciality."²⁰ Emotional processes in a family or congregation have the power to subvert or override its religious values. "The emotional system of any family, parishioner or congregational, can always 'jam' the spiritual messages it is receiving."²¹ Therefore, if emotional healing within the family structure of the church can be fostered, it will prepare the way for other, more spiritual experiences.

Scope and Limitations of the Project

This project will examine one local church congregation for problem areas to which interventions based on the systems theory of family counseling will be applied. The congregation will be analyzed as to how it functions as a group, and direct interventions derived from systems theory used where needed. There will also be education for understanding of the systems approach for key lay leaders and other people interested in seeing change in the church where problems exist. Direct interventions will be made only during a three month period, although the educational process will take approximately nine months.

No attempt will be made to work with other congregations, or to work on problems which cannot be analyzed or dealt with through the systems approach.

Although it is not a direct part of this study, it is hoped and expected that spiritual growth in the congregation will also be enhanced.

Procedure for Integration

The methodology for this project includes study of systems theory and how it has been practiced in family counseling. Theories about how the systems approach can be used in organizations as well as

applications already made will also be studied. Practical direct interventions will then be derived from the study, and applied to the local church congregation.

The ethical basis for making direct interventions according to the systems approach will be included in the study, as will a brief look at the structure, administrative and theological characteristics of the black church. The church involved in the study is an ethnic church with all three members of African-American descent. This church was not chosen because of its ethnic make-up, but simply because I happened to be appointed to that particular church as pastor.

The scope of this project will be limited to one urban congregation, a United Methodist church with members who all belong to the black ethnic group, with an active intervention period of three months. A follow-up check will be made after the intervention period ends.

A model for some of the interventions is based on Edwin Friedman's interventions with a synagogue congregation presented in Generation to Generation. Friedman had been the pastor of a growing congregation which was losing momentum and in which conflict was developing. Friedman was doing work in systems theory at the time, and used those theories to develop interventions which brought the congregation back to a healthy state.

Chapter Outlines

Chapter 2 presents the first step in the application of the systems approach to the local church. It will include an analysis of the church based on Massey and McKinney's Church Administration in the Black Perspective²² and the systems theory of marriage and family counseling.

This analysis will include evaluation of the decision making sequences and hierarchy of the church as it relates to administrative expectations within this congregation. Relationships and triangles within the church, and the function of certain individuals and several committees in the organization will also be examined.

It is necessary to have a basic understanding of systems theory and what it can and cannot accomplish, and what the goals of therapeutic intervention are, before interventions can be made. Chapter 3 will present some of the basic tenets of the systems approach, concentrating on two key concepts which are used in this study: the transgenerational approach and brief therapy.

It is important that interventions be made with integrity. In the church, it is also important to have a sound ethical and theological basis from which to work. Chapter 4 will explore the ethical issues of general rules and John Rawls theory of practice conception,²³ Jay Haley's concepts of fair exchange and social control, confidentiality and the control (withholding) of information,²⁴ and the role of the pastor, manipulation, and values and how they affect intervention by the pastor in the congregation.

Chapter 5 will present two direct interventions based on the above analysis. The results of the interventions will be reported, and conclusions will be made.

Chapter 6 will end with conclusions about the use of the systems approach to marriage and family planning and how it can be used in the church, and some of the implications for further research.

Summary

Along with the appointment to a local church came the realization

that some strategies were necessary to deal with the problems in the organization, and a way was needed to bring about change. Systems theory, especially as expressed by Jay Haley, Paul Watzlawick, Edwin Friedman, and several other therapists using the principles of brief therapy provided a framework in which to function effectively in the local church setting.

This study will apply the systems approach and the work of brief therapists to one local church.

Notes

Chapter 1

1. Kenon Callahan seminar presentation in Los Angeles, November 1987. References are to terms used in Callahan, 12 Keys to an Effective Church (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), xxv-xxix.

2. Walk to Emmaus is a weekend of study and spiritual renewal and commitment to Christian discipleship offered by others who have experienced the weekend. The Emmaus movement is organized by each local community. The weekend is structured on materials available through the Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church, Nashville.

3. Callahan, xxix.

4. Joseph H. Brown and Dana N. Christensen, Family Therapy: Theory and Practice (Monterey, Calif.: Brooks/Cole, 1986), 297.

5. Brown and Christensen, 298.

6. Brown and Christensen, 298.

7. Brown and Christensen, 298.

8. Brown and Christensen, 300.

9. Brown and Christensen, 300.

10. Brown and Christensen, 300.

11. Brown and Christensen, 300.

12. Jay Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 104.

13. Richard Fisch, John H. Weakland and Lynn Segal, The Tactics of Change: Doing Therapy Briefly, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1983), 294.

14. Fisch, et al, 290.

15. Fisch, et al, 290.

16. Fisch, et al, 288.

17. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 120.
18. Paul Watzlawick, John H. Weakland and Richard Fisch, Change: Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution (New York: Norton, 1974).
19. Edwin H. Friedman, Generation to Generation, Family Process in Church and Synagogue (New York: Guilford, 1985), 1.
20. Friedman, 6.
21. Friedman, 7.
22. Floyd Massey, Jr. and Samuel Berry McKinney, Church Administration in the Black Perspective (Valley Forge: Judson, 1976).
23. John Rawls, "Two Concepts of Rules," Philosophical Review 64 (1955), 3-32; reprinted as "Rule Utilitarianism" in Value and Obligation: Systematic Readings in Ethics ed. Richard B. Brandt (New York: Harcourt, 1961), 230-238.
24. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy.

CHAPTER 2

An Administrative Analysis of One Church Congregation

Purpose of this Chapter

Before any interventions can be made in a system that has been determined to have dysfunctional elements, an analysis must be made of that system. In a therapeutic situation, that analysis would be made in one or more interviews with the family. In this study, Massey and McKinney's book Church Administration in the Black Perspective will be used for general information about the black church, as well as an analysis based on a year and a half of time spent with the congregation used in this study.¹

Massey and McKinney give an overview of the background and organization of the Black Church in America today. Although their data is taken from the 12 million black Baptists in the United States in three national Baptist Conventions, much of the information is directly applicable to the United Methodist church in this study.²

Church Characteristics

In giving background information about the black church; Massey and McKinney tell of how the church soon became the substitute for the African family and tribe. Having been forcibly displaced from their native homeland, the strong tribal ties based on blood relationships

were also disrupted. As blacks accepted the Christian religion, relational ties within the church community replaced the family ties which had been forever lost. The strong bonds within the church family are retained to this day in many black churches.³

The blacks who found themselves uprooted were not allowed to maintain family or tribal ties which would have given them a continuity with their past. Instead, other forms of community evolved, and when the church began to preach to the blacks, they were ready. Most had begun to question the efficacy of loyalty to African gods who had allowed them to become captives, and they were open to concepts of the Christian religion and to the acceptance of a new god. With severe restrictions imposed upon their worship practices by white slaveholders, the black slave Christians were forced to meet without their slave-owners knowledge, often in secret very early in the morning or very late at night.⁴ However, it was this autonomy which enabled the blacks in the church to build their own organization, which has provided a place for a sense of ownership and family to develop and flourish. Massey states that the average black has only the church. For a young person in the church whose parents have passed away, often it is someone else in the church who will take them over and raise them. A lot of people do not have any other extended family, and many do not have anywhere else to go. Especially in places like Harlem where many people live in a small, crowded apartment, they come to church and spend the day. They eat breakfast, go to church, eat lunch, spend the afternoon--they spend the day.⁵

Although it will be seen that the systems approach to marriage and family counseling does not need to parallel other organizations in an

exact one-to-one structural make-up, but rather is about conceiving the organization as a whole, it is also good to notice that the family ties within the black church make the application of the systems approach especially appropriate and helpful. The black church not only functions like a family, it actually is a family for most of the members. Even with drugs and gangs, persistent problems in urban churches, the black church maintains its important position as the center for the black family structure, and of black religious and social life.

Historically, the rural Baptist church was open only on weekends. Just as in the early Methodist churches, the pastor itinerated between several different churches, and the laity ran the church. On Sundays when the pastor was at a different church, often the Baptist congregations without pastors would visit another church where a pastor was preaching that Sunday. The rural church was also characterized by an emotionalism that has been more restrained in recent times.⁶

Although the church in this study had been meeting for twenty years, first as a community center and then as a chartered church congregation, I was the first full-time pastor assigned to the church. Most previous pastors had been associates from the founding church who came only on Sunday to preach (this church was originally a project of a much larger church several miles away). The day-to-day work of the church was left to the laity. Recently, several of the pastors had been either part-time or retired, and expected to work about ten hours a week. This change from a part-time pastor to a full-time pastor was welcomed by the congregation (they had been requesting a full-time pastor for many years), but it created some uncertainty in the administration of the church. The lines of power were tested, and some

of the responsibilities within the church were no longer clearly defined. There were two possible causes for this situation. Either people now expected the pastor to make decisions and/or perform tasks that had previously been done by the laity, or there was someone in a position of authority who now asked questions about tasks that had once had private, unquestioned ownership.

In the Urban church, many characteristics of the rural churches were preserved even with the pressures of city jobs which created different work schedules for people, and some of those characteristics remain to this day. Many churches still visit neighboring churches, the usher board is an integral part of the church hierarchy and perform their duties wearing uniforms and with synchronized steps and arm gestures, deacons are honored much as in the past and often sit in the first pew, directly in front of the pastor. Deaconesses and the mothers of the church often wear white for holy communion. Anniversaries are a cause for celebrations at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, as are other special occasions.⁷

My first Sunday at the church in this study was on the first Sunday in July, 1987. There are two parts of the service which are notable in terms of the above characteristics: the usher board and the deaconesses and mothers of the church.

When it came time for the offering, the two ushers, one male and one female, walked smartly down the center aisle of the church, one hand behind their back, the other swinging by their side. They were both dressed in light blue suits (jacket and either pants or skirt), white shirts, and gloves. They stood at attention, one hand still behind their back, while the offering plates were blessed and given to them. They

passed the offering plates through the congregation and brought the plates forward during the Doxology and stood at attention while the prayer was said. Although this is customary in most black churches, it was the first time I had seen this very impressive ritual.

That first Sunday was also a communion Sunday. There, on the first pew in front of the pulpit sat two elderly women dressed in white. There were also two other women dressed all in white who were quite a few years younger who sat farther back in the congregation. This was the deaconess/mothers board in this church. When it came time for communion, those women were the ones who came forward and unveiled the elements, made sure that I washed my hands in a bowl of water provided for that purpose, and that I dried my hands on a white towel. Only then could the congregation come up to a front rail to be served. The women assisted during communion by gathering the individual communion glasses after the people had received the cup, and they covered the remaining elements and the entire communion rail with white cloth after the communion was over.

During the first year at the church we had an anniversary program and a music program, both held at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday afternoon. We also participated in several music programs at other black churches, also held at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday afternoon. Several church members remarked that they used to do some visiting of other congregations, told about how nice it had been, and stated that they had not done any visiting in quite a while. "That was so nice, we should do more of that," was a common comment.⁸

Just as in any nuclear family, this church had its own rituals, expectations, and desires about how to honor certain members and interact with other churches. Just as a family has patterns of behavior,

so does the church. The rituals and expectations of this church were perhaps more vivid to me because many were totally new. I realized that although there were many similarities with my own cultural background, there were also many new elements.

Deacon Board

The role of the laity as stated by Massey and McKinney is important for this study.

The rural pastor usually served about four churches per month, primarily as preacher. His actual financial sustenance was, however, outside of the church. The itinerant nature of his ministry, though, created a leadership vacuum which the deacons filled. The chairman of the deacon board was often the "de facto pastor." . . . In many instances, excellent rapport existed between pastor and deacons. If the "head deacon" was supportive of the pastor, harmony existed in the church. However, some head deacons had reputations of tyranny far more diabolical than many a pastor with dictatorial leanings could imagine.⁹

Massey and McKinney state that the deacon board is often the most powerful group in the church. If the deacons are cooperative and supportive of the pastor, the church prospers. However, if there are power struggles between the deacons and the pastor or within the deacon board, or if the deacons are not supportive of the pastor, the church will be filled with strife. The deacons can then skillfully abort any efforts of the pastor.¹⁰

Massey and McKinney describe the role of deacon in the rural church as one which could make or break the pastor. The conflict with the deacon board or the head deacon often was the result of a deacon who preferred to run the church without the aid of a pastor. The deacons are characterized as sometimes being authoritative to the point of tyranny. In this instance, the head deacon, the pastor and the congregation form a triangle of relationships, with the deacon at the top of the

hierarchy. The congregation functions as the tribe or family once functioned in Africa--the glue which holds the system together--and the deacon functioned as the tribal leader once had functioned. When this was the case, the pastor could come or go, but the head deacon and deacon board and other officers ruled the church, and the members could continue on with their leadership.¹¹

Although not dressed in special garb, or performing any special duty during the service, I soon learned that in the front pew opposite the mothers of the church were seated two men who were spoken of with great reverence. Although they were not given a specific title (the name "deacon board" belongs within the Baptist tradition and is not an official title in a United Methodist congregation), these men functioned as the unofficial deacon board. They differed from Massey and McKinney's description of the deacon board in that they did not fill an administrative role within the congregation, but they certainly functioned as spiritual leaders and advisors. They were looked to as having great wisdom. If one goes back to African tribal sources for a model, they would probably have been closer to the healer or shaman rather than the tribal chief.

Trustee Board and Other Groups

The trustee board is characterized as the one which often clashes with the deacon board, to their dismay. It is implied that the Deacon Board usually wins any dispute. Other officers who may have power are the church treasurer and/or financial secretary, and their power comes just as any group in the society would as they gain power through the control of money. Other church fellowship or service groups often have power as well as their own bank accounts. These groups include the music

department, the usher board, and the women's societies and men's fellowship.¹² The women's societies, especially, are a power center in the church. Massey and McKinney state:

Many black women, who believe in "equal pay for equal work," claim that they could take over the church if they so desired. However, they recognize the need for viable images of black males and support the church which keeps the men "out front."

In the average black church there is a women's block of power that functions as a prime mover. In some churches it might be the women's society; in others the deaconesses' or mothers' board or young matrons. Every pastor owes much of his strength in a church to the support of the women.¹³

I soon found out that there were three individuals who each thought they were personally responsible for running the church. One was the trustee board chairperson (Mr. T), one was a member of the personnel committee (Staff-Parish Relations Committee) (Mr. U) and one was on the finance committee (Mrs. A), who was the matriarch of the church. I found out much later that Mrs. A had taken over Mrs. O's responsibilities in the kitchen many years ago, in effect pushing Mrs. O out of her way. Mrs. A came very early to church on Sunday mornings, and sat in her pew and "held court" with others who came early before the service began. It also seemed that Mr. U was a spokesperson for Mrs. A, who almost never said anything publicly.

Although there were many other sub-groups and subtle and not-so-subtle relationships, the above relationships were those that were the key relationships that governed the administrative and emotional life of the church. The following relational triangles seemed to function within the church: Mrs. A, Mr. T and Mr. U; the trustee board, the staff-parish committee, and the finance committee; a group headed by Mrs. A, the remainder of the congregation, and the pastor; and the women, the men and the pastor. Although the women did dominate the life of the

church, the men were in the positions of authority, and it was important for the men to maintain their status. It was a very important way for the women to show respect for the men in their community.

Role of the Pastor

Massey and McKinney point out that the black pastor is expected to function in the community as well as in the church. This places the pastor in a central position in the community. "Because the black preacher belongs to the community, he is available for ridicule. He serves as the people's psychological lightning rod, a possible means of neutralizing their shocks or venting their hostilities."¹⁴

The role of the pastor in the black church is as a leader who must lead the flock. He is a father-figure who leads, not a humble servant who serves. He must be a strong leader who can give orders, but also have the wisdom to understand the power he has comes from the trust of the congregation, and that it does have limits. To take order, however, is not considered helpful and is a contradiction of his role within the church community.¹⁵

This strong leadership is again based on the role of the African tribal chief. In the ideal situation, the purpose of this power is not to overpower the congregation and subjugate it, but to maintain democracy. Massey and McKinney quote a black pastor and theologian who was asked whether he believed in the strong pastor or strong democracy in the black church:

It is not a question of either/or, but both/and. . . .
A strong pastor maintains democracy. He keeps things in order, minimizes power grabs, maintains the balance of power. When someone or a board calls the pastor a dictator, it simply means that the pastor is keeping that person or board from dictating.¹⁶

Consistent with the above role description, the black pastor must

be very skillful at dealing with conflict within the congregation and settling disputes within boards and among the membership of the church. If he could not do this, it was impossible for planning and programing to be effective.¹⁷

For almost every aspect of the expected role of the black pastor, I came out at a disadvantage. The black pastor is expected to function as a community leader. I found out that many black pastors had lived in the area for years, had family ties in many places, and had a network of people to help them and who could provide support. As a white female new to the area, I had none of these. I was also looked upon as something of a curiosity. Black pastors welcomed me and offered support, but outside the church it was difficult to find and maintain relational ties.

I also did not fit the father image, was not familiar with the role of the black matriarch, and came with a role model much closer to the servant rather than a powerful tribal chief. Simply because I was a female and there was no other niche for me, I was unavoidably placed in competition with Mrs. A, the ruling matriarch of the church. This was not to my advantage, to say the least. I soon learned that there was no way to win when Mrs. A was in charge of the game. The systems approach gave me a vantage point from which I could get a new perspective, change the rules of my game and not play Mrs. A's game while still belonging to the same system (the church).

When Massey and McKinney describe the role of the pastor as an arbitor who constantly settles disputes, he accurately described what was needed in this particular congregation. I did not want to maintain the existing system, for it put me in a position where I experienced constant emotional turmoil and pain due to on-going conflict, and it

seemed counterproductive to the ministry of the church.

Reframing my own perception of the entire congregation by using the systems approach to marriage and family counseling allowed me to differentiate from the system, analyze the relationships and issues from the aspect of function within the system, and formulate several strategic plans to bring about healing within the congregation.

Celebrations and Special Days

Massey and McKinney address the topic of celebrations and special days. They trace the custom of having special celebrations to African tribal roots.

Such celebrations provided opportunity for the elevation of deeds of the chief and for regeneration of the society itself. Disputes of all types were settled. . . . In this context, regeneration meant the reenforcement of social values and the strengthening of the solidarity of the community. Fun was a by-product of the festival.¹⁸

The festivals were an integral part of the African cultural traditions, and were especially important for the perpetuation of the oral history. This history kept the memory of deeds of the tribal chiefs alive, and the praises of those deeds were often sung. This tradition included appreciation, joy and gratitude, which were all expressed in these festivals. The festivals were also an occasion for bringing up disagreements among tribal members to be settled.

The black church has kept some of the functions of these tribal festivals, and today uses special celebrations for fund raising, fellowship, and to express appreciation to special persons and/or groups. One particular kind of special service in the black church today is the celebration of the anniversary of the pastor.¹⁹

One of the areas in this church which needed healing was the emotional dependence on the founding pastor, Rev. H. A celebration in

his honor was a major part of the healing process of the congregation. The systems analysis of this celebration is presented in detail in Chapter 5.

Freedom

Two other considerations raised by Massey and McKinney are important to note. One is the fact that the Baptist church has a tradition of freedom and local autonomy. Massey and McKinney quote Howard Thurman, a black theologian:

There is so much local autonomy that any Baptist church can ordain its own men; it's not accountable to anybody beyond the congregation. I would say that its democratic practices in ordination account for the general appeal of the denomination. . . . And this would have special appeal to people who were terribly circumscribed everywhere else in their world.²⁰

The other fact is that "[h]istorically, the black church is the only institution that black people control free of white domination. As a result the black church is the custodian of the hopes of black people and often their only hope of gaining administrative experience."²¹

These aspects of the black church are important to this study, especially because it was being conducted by a white female. Simply because I was not black, I was a challenge to the above model of the black church as free of white domination. This placed me in a double-bind situation, where there were two related but contradictory messages at the same time. If I fulfilled the expectations the congregation had for a pastor and was their leader, I was also a white person in a position of domination and they lost their freedom and autonomy from the white world. If I did not lead, I became powerless and would be unable to fulfill the role necessary to settle disputes and power struggles within the congregation, and thus would not fulfill the expectations of

the congregation. Even when the people gave lip service to acceptance of a white, female pastor, there remained these inherent contradictions. The systems approach enabled me to reframe the situation for myself, so that I could find a way to function within the system.

A Split Congregation

Massey and McKinney also make a distinction between mass churches and class churches. A mass church is generally one that appeals to people in the lower socio-economic part of the culture, and is characterized by an exuberant and lively worship style. A class church is characterized as being middle- to upper-class, and carries values of those social groups who generally prefer a more dignified worship style. A mass-class church combines the best of both, with a worship service that is alive with the spirit, and yet appeals to the intellect.²³

The church to which I had been assigned was in a struggle over whether it was a mass church, a class church, or a mass-class church. The founding church can be characterized as a class church, and most of the people who came from that church and followed Rev. H were middle-class and educated. They were staunchly United Methodist, and liked a reserved worship service that tended to be somewhat dignified and intellectual.

Many of the newer members were former Baptists who had moved from the south, and were interested in a lively worship service in which they felt the spirit was present. They did not care much about Methodist polity or theology, and liked a worship service that was more emotional than intellectual.

This split created a triangle composed of Baptists, Methodists, and the pastor.

The Black Church as Family

As stated above, the application of the systems approach of marriage and family counseling to the church does not depend on a one-to-one equivalency with a nuclear family. The church in this study is a congregation of over fifty active members, and others on the periphery. The systems approach has also been used with much larger groups. Although there are many surface similarities between the distinct parts of the whole in families and churches, it is perhaps more important to realize that the systems approach is based on the concept that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, that is, that it how the individual parts fit together to make the whole, and that the whole has a life of its own, that makes it a unique and important process. The individual does not loose identity within the group, but maintains a sense of self along with being connected to the group.

What is important in using the systems approach is that we look at the entire group as a whole, and each of the parts within it, and analyze how the individual parts interact to make up the whole and what their function is within the whole, what patterns of behavior exist, what patterns are helpful and which are harmful, where there is the most desire for change and growth and where there is the most resistance.

As in a family, relational triangles are important to recognize when we are working with a group or organization such as the church. In our culture, the most functional pattern of relationships within the nuclear family is to have the parents a hierarchical unit with the children under their care. Ideally, also, there is open communication and respect (functional behaviors) rather than dominance, abuse or exploitation (dysfunctional behaviors) within the relational system. In

the nuclear family, if one of the parents brings a child into the relationship with the other parent, it creates a triangle. Triangle relationships are a natural part of our interaction with one another, but when they become an avoidance or denial tactic, they need to be readjusted. When a parent uses a child to get back at the other parent, it is an exploitation of that relationship. In the church, if the pastor sides with one group consistently the pattern of behavior is not as helpful as when all groups are supported. Groups in the church which take opposite stands on a particular issue function much like sibling rivalry might in a home environment. The pastor often is expected to function as a parent, and must know when and how to maintain that relationship or it creates dis-ease in the system. This does not mean that the system is static, for with growth come changes, and a well-functioning system can shift with changes in pastors and leaders. It is often when the parts of a system are insecure that they become stuck, and cannot adjust to or cope with a new challenge when flexibility and growth are called for.

In a church, which is a community in a covenant relationship which can be as binding as the marriage relationship, it is also important to evaluate the expected function for each individual or group. Massey indicates that a church has a better chance of being a stable and growing community when the head deacon supports the pastor. When the head deacon is not supportive, it leaves an opening for power struggles, which can create continuous conflict and dissention within the system. This is closely analogous to the relationship of parents working together, communicating well, being able to create stability for their children and also being able to keep the in-laws at a respectable

distance but still connected to the system. The most functional triangle in the church situation Massey describes would be pastor--head deacon--congregation, where the pastor and head deacon communicate well and can work together in leading the congregation. There are, of course, many sub-triangles within the larger church system: pastor, head deacon, deacon board; pastor, head deacon, head trustee; pastor, men's group, women's group; deacon board, trustee board, other church committees; pastor, the pastor's nuclear family, and the congregation; etc.

As the leader of the church, the pastor is the one person who can and must relate to all the individuals and committees. It is important to have individual relationships so that trust is built, and the pastor has the complete confidence of the persons in his care. These relationships are also vital to the decision making process for the pastor, for wise decisions come far more easily if he or she knows his or her congregation. However, the systems approach can provide a corrective to a perspective in which the individual is the major concern to the neglect of the church as a community. In our culture, it is more typical that we evaluate everything according to the individual, to the detriment of the healing bonds that being a member of a community can provide. The systems approach brings a perspective which balances the individual and the group, to the benefit of both. In order to maintain that healthy balance, it is important for the leader of the group, whether therapist or pastor, to relate to all parts of the system and not side for any length of time with any one group or faction. In that way, the therapist or pastor will not play favorites or encourage power struggles and conflict, but help each individual and sub-group to feel that they are supported, appreciated and cared for. Then, when

differences do emerge, it is far easier to find an acceptable compromise or resolution to the problem.

It is important to note that a therapist works with one individual or a small group (most often the nuclear family, often including important members of the extended family). Here, the same concepts the therapist uses are being applied to a much larger, more complex, system. The qualities of leadership and therapeutic skills that enable the therapist to analyze and lead a small group and maintain his position of authority are even more important with a large group. It must also be noted that the pastor's main function is to guide the spiritual life of the congregation. The system needs to run smoothly to enable the pastor to do his or her job more easily. Although there is much intrinsic value to having a system which does work well, the goal here is to create a functional system so that time and energy will be used efficiently for ministry and all that that entails. It is to the benefit of both the pastor and the congregation to use therapeutic skills when necessary to maintain a well-functioning system.

Summary

Based on Massey and McKinney, this chapter presented basic characteristics of the black church and how the church congregation in question conformed to those characteristics. The church seemed quite typical in the observance of special celebrations, visitation (or the desire to visit) with other churches, the presence of a deaconess'/mothers' board, and men who functioned as deacons in the church. It also was typical in that there were power struggles between a church matriarch and other groups in the church, and that the men in the church held most of the official leadership positions while the women

worked behind the scenes.

Problems that emerged as a result of this analysis were the instability of the leadership hierarchy resulting in continual power struggles, the presence of a double-bind situation because of the appointment of a white female as pastor, and an awareness that the church was split across denominational and class lines.

The systems approach offered a new perspective to me as the pastor, so that I could look at the church system in terms of how people functioned within the system rather than looking at specific personalities. This enabled me to formulate several strategic plans for healing within the congregation. These plans and their results will be presented in detail in chapter 5.

•

Notes

Chapter 2

1. Massey and McKinney.
2. Massey and McKinney, 9.
3. Massey and McKinney, 19.
4. Massey and KcKinney, 13.
5. Floyd Massey, Jr., telephone interview with author, 7 Feb. 1991.
6. Massey and McKinney, 16-17.
7. Massey and McKinney, 21-22.
8. Mrs. Vivian Compton, statement made in church, 1987.
9. Massey and McKinney, 18.
10. Massey and McKinney, 40.
11. Massey and McKinney, 18-19.
12. Massey and McKinney, 40-41.
13. Massey and McKinney, 43-44.
14. Massey and McKinney, 25.
15. Massey and McKinney, 34-35.
16. Massey and McKinney, 36.
17. Massey and McKinney, 23.
18. Massey and McKinney, 48.
19. Massey and McKinney, 48-49.
20. Massey and McKinney, 10.

21. Massey and McKinney, 11.
22. Brown and Christensen, 7.
23. Massey and McKinney, 12.

CHAPTER 3

Basic Concepts of the Systems Approach and One Church Congregation

Introduction

The systems approach to marriage and family counseling began in the 1950s in response to the changes in how we think about society in general. With the revolution of communications and computer technology, human beings have had to cope with increasing masses of information.

Systems thinking. . . focuses less on content and more on the process that governs the data; less on the cause-and-effect connections that link bits of information and more on the principles of organization that give data meaning. . . .

The components do not function according to their "nature" but according to their position in the network.

It is the structure. . . that becomes the unit of study.¹

Therefore, it is necessary to study the entire system to understand any of the parts of the system. This concept of wholeness means that "if one member in the system changes, then all members of that system will change because of that one member's behavior and the reverberating change created as each member responds to other members' changes."²

Two concepts of brief therapy have emerged from this particular understanding:

1. You have only to make a slight initial change to effect change throughout the entire system, which will destabilize the system to make way for greater change.³

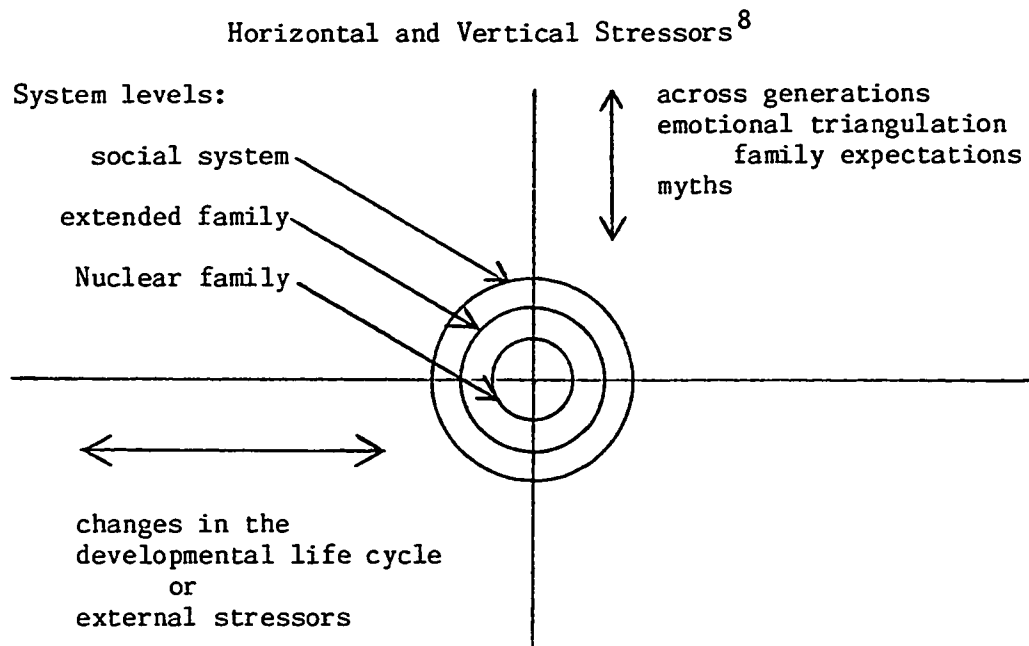
2. You do not have to work with the identified patient to bring about change in that person's behavior. It will probably be more advantageous to begin by working with the person who most desires change, rather than with the identified patient who might be more resistant.⁴

The life cycle from birth, childhood, adolescence, marriage, adulthood to old age is important to the systems approach. Milton Erickson based his work on how well the individual could move through the stages within the family system.⁵ Brown & Christensen have added separation/divorce, single parenthood, and courtship and remarriage to their presentation of the life cycle.⁶ A family is determined to be functional when they can move through these stages changing the relationships between people as the growth of children and resultant changing relationship between husband and wife necessitates. This clinical view of the family life cycle as analyzed by Carter and McGoldrick in the following statement:

[The] conceptualization of the nuclear family [is] as a three-generational system that reacts to pressures from generational tensions as well as developmental transitions. . . . Anxiety is transmitted vertically across the generations through emotional triangulation, family expectations, and myths. Anxiety is also transmitted horizontally through changes in the developmental life cycle. . . . When a certain amount of stress occurs on both axes, then a crisis in the system often follows.⁷

A church goes through growth much as a family does. Not only do individuals within the church grow and develop, which requires adjustment, but the pastor may change, and leadership within the system rotates. This requires a great deal of flexibility and ability to adjust. Tension is produced on the same two axes as within a family: vertically through emotional triangulation and traditions within the

church community, and horizontally through changes in development and leadership. If enough stress builds up across both axes, there will often be a crisis in the church.



Basic Concepts

There are five concepts of the systems approach presented by Edwin Friedman. They are the "idea of the identified patient, the concept of homeostasis (balance), differentiation of self, the extended family field, and emotional triangles."⁹

Identified Patient

The identified patient is the person who is seen by the system as the one who has been identified as "sick". Within the systems approach, however, that person is not seen as "sick" but "as the one in whom the family's stress or pathology has surfaced. . . . The purpose of using the phrase identified patient is to avoid isolating the 'problem' family member from the overall relationship system of the family."¹⁰

In the church congregation in this study, there was one person who usually fulfilled the function of the identified patient. I will call her Mrs. O. Mrs. O had worn a particularly sour expression on her face throughout her life, but in recent years it had grown even more sour. Her husband had been an alcoholic and died about 20 years ago. This raises the question of how she and her husband had functioned as a system to maintain his alcoholism. They had not had any children, so Mrs. O now lived alone in an apartment. She often expressed herself with angry words, and was extremely critical of everyone (especially the pastor), and negative about everything. The youth in the church did not like her because she was rude and angry with them, and many people expressed the thought that they had stayed away from the church at one time or another, or had thought about leaving, because of the way Mrs. O treated them.

It was therefore easy for people in the congregation to blame Mrs. O for many problems, and they did. They also expressed dislike for Mrs. O to the pastor. A few people gave her special attention, thinking that they would change her by giving her a hug and kind words when they met her on Sundays. However, Mrs. O continued to be mean and nasty to everybody except for four or five people who would gather together in the church before the worship service. They gathered on one side of the church, always early, talked until time for church, and then separated going to their respective places, scattered but still on that one side of the church sanctuary. It seemed that Mrs. O fulfilled the function of the identified patient in this church system.

Homeostasis (Balance)

As stated above, "the tendency of a system to seek stability and

equilibrium is referred to as homeostasis."¹¹ This stability is what allows the family to function together, but if the system refuses to adapt to a needed change, or is too stuck to respond to a crisis or stress, an imbalance will emerge in the form of a problem with an identified patient. Therefore, "the most important ramification of homeostasis for family theory is its emphasis on position rather than personality when explaining the emergence of a symptom. . . . The concept of homeostasis also helps explain a system's resistance to change."¹² For example, one member of a system states that he desires a particular change to come about. If that change threatens the stability of the system, even the person desiring change will unconsciously find a way to sabotage the movement toward change. The purpose of family therapy is to open the system, to destabilize it for a time, and to allow a needed change or growth to take place. Friedman states that although few nonfamily emotional systems achieve the emotional interdependence and balance of a nuclear family system, the church or synagogue comes the closest. This is "in part because it is made up of families, and in part because so much of the force of religion is realized within the family."¹³

The church in this study had an average Sunday attendance of fifty-two people. When the church began, it had been a community center supported by a founding church. The founding church had sent its choir, its associate pastor, and some of its members to worship at a 9:30 a.m. service in this building. They would then go to the mother church for their own 11:00 a.m. Sunday morning worship. After a few years, some of the people from the mother church got tired of this arrangement and stopped attending. The choir no longer attended, and most of the members

from the founding church stopped coming, although some of the people did stay on at the community center. They were motivated by the possibility of helping the community, and they wanted this to become an independent church. That eventually happened, and the church now is an officially incorporated congregation. Although there had been a few additions through the years, the same people who began the church 20 years earlier were still in positions of power. As some of the members had either died, become too ill to attend, or moved away, attendance had dwindled to the present number, and there was unspoken concern about the ability of the church to continue. No one verbalized the fear of eventually losing the church, but it was a steady undercurrent in the face of declining attendance. Each member wanted to do the best for the church but no one had a concrete plan. The concern was expressed in general anxiety throughout the system, and verbalization of the need for new members. Mrs. O as the identified patient functioned as the conduit through whom the anxiety and dissatisfaction was verbally expressed.

The church was stuck in a homeostatic condition, unable to respond creatively and positively to the growing stress and anxiety created by dwindling attendance. There was tension on the vertical axes created especially through expectations and myths, i.e. the expectation that once the church was formed as an autonomous congregation they would grow and, I suspect, become much like the mother church. This did not happen, and it was difficult to evaluate the situation because people wanted to see what they expected rather than what was really there--they were in denial of what the church had become. There was tension in the horizontal axes of changes in development. People in the church had not really accepted the fact that the founding pastor, Rev. H, would not

someday come to be their minister, as well as the fact that this was largely an aging congregation. The congregation was in a state of crisis as a result of this tension.

Differentiation of Self

Friedman emphasizes the concept of the differentiation of the self as "the capacity to be an 'I' while remaining connected."¹⁴ In order to bring healing to a system, differentiation can be encouraged by reinforcing the strengths in the family member most differentiated, and coaching that person to stay on a committed course.

This does not mean coaching the leader to leave; on the contrary, that usually is neither differentiation nor a promotion of change. It is the maintaining of self-differentiation while remaining a part of the family that optimizes the opportunities for fundamental change. This . . . is also the basis for the leadership model.¹⁵

Friedman emphasizes that real differentiation demands maintaining a nonanxious presence in the midst of emotional reactions of others in the system.

The congregation in this study had many members who were tied to each other in an emotionally reactive way. The system was interconnected, with few people highly differentiated (i.e. emotionally nonanxious and calm, and maintaining their own integrity and ideas). When Mrs. O or Mr. U made a fuss, everyone was automatically in a dither. This gave Mrs. O and Mr. U quite a bit of power, although those in the congregation did not want to think in those terms.

When considering a course of action, Mrs. C and her friends were sure to say, "Well, Mrs. A won't like it." Therefore, I concluded that Mrs. A also had power within the congregation. There were two leaders, Mr. and Mrs. M, who were more highly differentiated and remained outside the emotional turmoil, but, although they were 'respected' and were some

of the founding members, they were also on the periphery of the main church system.

Jay Haley states:

Shifting one's thinking from the individual unit to a social unit of two or more people has certain consequences for a therapist. Not only must the therapist think in different ways about human dilemmas, but he or she must consider himself or herself as a member of the social unit that contains the problem.¹⁶

This statement also holds true for pastors, I found. When I was first appointed to the church, I was taken aback by all the emotional reaction within the congregation, and I was unable to differentiate from it very well. On several occasions I reacted emotionally in ways that did not please me and were not effective. I tended to take the situation in the church personally even when people told me it had been going on for years. When I incorporated the systems approach, it allowed me to think of myself in terms of my function within the system, and just that amount of change in my thinking allowed me to differentiate enough to learn to remain nonanxious in the midst of high emotional reactivity. I was unavoidable a part of the system, but I could differentiate myself emotionally (distance myself), and also become part of the process for change and increased differentiation for others within the system.

Extended Family Field

Self-differentiation is connected to the concept of the extended family field, for there is an intergenerational component to this differentiation. Friedman states a theory of Muray Bowen that "a key variable in the degree to which any family can change fundamentally is the amount of self-differentiation that existed in previous generations in the extended families of both partners."¹⁷ These previous generations are the extended family field, and that includes "our family of origin,

that is, our original nuclear family (parents and siblings) plus our other relatives (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.)."¹⁸ The systems approach has extended the awareness of the sphere of influence far beyond a person's parents, and this extension can include the system at work, church or synagogue.

Friedman sees the concept of the extended family field as a bonus for clergy and their families.

No one on this earth. . . . is in quite the same position for coming into contact with the multigenerational processes. . . . We can even see them in the emotional precesses of our churches and synagogues, in the way such institutions become part of a given congregant's or parishioner's extended family, with all the consequences that holds for emotional intensity in both systems.¹⁹

The extended family field for the congregation in this study included the mother church and the pastor of that church, Rev. H, as well as several members who were too ill to attend church and a few members who had elected to stop attending. For the purposes of this study, I am going to concentrate on the significance of the pastor of the mother church, Rev. H. In an interview with Rev. H shortly after being appointed as pastor of the church, Rev. H had told me the story of how the community center began. He was driving through the neighborhood one day and saw many children and young people playing on the streets. He also happened to drive by a boarded up church of his denomination. Upon checking, he discovered that it had been closed for several years, but was still owned by the district. The church originally had been a white church, in a white neighborhood, but had not been able to make the transition along with the neighborhood when it changed to a predominately black neighborhood. Rev. H was a man of vision, and he wanted to use the building to house a community center to provide a

place for the children in the community to go and play, and provide a place where they could also turn when they needed help and guidance. He made some inquiries, got support from the district and his church members, and had a work day to clean up the building. A miracle happened and the community center was open! Rev. H began both by having community events and by holding church on Sunday morning. Rev. H would preach at the community center at 9:30 a.m.. The choir from his church would be there to support him. He encouraged members from the mother church who lived in the area to attend the community center services. People from the community began to get involved with this wonderful, large church. People of both churches respected and revered this charismatic pastor who had given impetus and motivation for the community center.

The founding of the community center was in 1968. After three years, Rev. H gave the responsibility for preaching at the community center to associates at the mother church. Times changed and the choir's enthusiasm for attending two worship services several miles apart waned. The people who were committed to the work of the center stayed on, and their desire was to begin their own church and combine it with the work of the community center. Their dreams came true, and the church was charted several years later.

As the people who worked in the center grew older, and as their children matured, many of the programs of the center ended. However, the church carried on, and the people in the congregation who had come from the founding church were sure that Rev. H, who cared so much for the center, who had encouraged them to leave the mother church for the center, would come back and be their pastor after he retired from his position at the founding church. It was their hope and dream that the

energy, the programs, the same spirit which had been theirs in the past would come again with the person of Rev. H.

Talking to people about Rev. H and the founding of the center, I found that many remained emotionally tied to the mother church and to Rev. H. Some of them felt that they had made a great sacrifice to change churches. Some changed because of loyalty to Rev. H. Some had thought about returning to the founding church, and missed some of the things it had offered, but it had just been too long and they were now a part of the new church. One person especially expressed disappointment over Rev. H's decision not to return to the church after his retirement. That person felt doubly betrayed when he elected instead to pastor church of another denomination.

Whoever the person, whatever the story, I sensed nostalgia, grief, and a definite strong tie with the past. This was tension across generations, tension between reality and church expectations which created great stress in the system.

Emotional Triangle

An emotional triangle is formed by any three persons or issues. . . . The basic law of emotional triangles is that when any two parts of a system become uncomfortable with one another, they will "triangle in" or focus upon a third person, or issue, as a way of stabilizing their own relationship with one another.²⁰

The emotional triangle is one of the most important of all the concepts in the systems approach to marriage and family counseling. Jay Haley approaches marriage therapy from the aspect of relational triangles.²¹ These triangles can be with a child, with a member of the family of origin, with someone at work, or with an issue. In a marriage, whatever the focus of the stress in the relationship, Haley seeks to introduce greater complexity into the relationship so that the couple

will have increased options for behavior and to destabilize the relationship while encouraging the couple to stay together to work on the relationship.²²

Triangulation is also basic to the transgenerational work of Murray Bowen.

Triangles are the natural consequence of two less-than-differentiated people who need to dissipate some of their conflict and tension through a third party. Triangles are not necessarily pathological--all human relationships can be thought of as possessing this characteristic.²³

Triangles appear to be fluid, and can change with the change in stress, bringing in a new person or issue, or dropping a person or issue as the occasion necessitates. Also, any one person can have relational triangles with many different people at the same time.

The basic triangle of the congregation in this study was between the congregation, Rev. H, and the present pastor. As long as the congregation was tied to Rev. H, as long as they really wanted him for their pastor, he would be present in the church in a real way, and the loyalty of the congregation could not shift to the present pastor.

There were several other triangles operational within the congregation. One was the triangle between the people present at the founding of the community center (the old guard) and people who had come in after Rev. H had left (the new guard), and the pastor. The loyalty of the new guard could easily attach to the present pastor, which created a split in the congregation.

Another triangle was between the middle-class, better educated, more affluent members; those of the working class with less material wealth; and the pastor.

One more triangle was between those of Baptist background, those of

United Methodist background, and the pastor and those who did not care what background they had come from.

In all of these triangles, there was great emotional stress, and nearly every person in the congregation was affected in some way.

Brief Therapy and Second Order Change

Brief therapy has been developed from Erickson's skills and methods as a hypnotist, which Erickson and Jay Haley both applied to therapeutic situations which did not involve the use of hypnosis. Haley then found that brief therapy fit into the newly emerging branch of psychotherapy now known as the systems approach to marriage and family counseling. Brief therapy most often uses a paradoxical intervention which employs two directives simultaneously, i.e. "Do as I say" and "Don't do as I say, behave spontaneously."²⁴ For the pastor, specific techniques that use this paradoxical directive and would be helpful. These include:

1. The acceptance of, and encouragement of, resistant behavior so that attempts at resistance are redefined as cooperative behavior.
2. Communication with the client in metaphor.
3. Encouraging a relapse of undesirable behavior when positive change has occurred.
4. If someone responds only partially, cut off the partially corrected behavior and shift to another area. Come back to the original response a little later, and the person [or groups] will be much more eager to completely respond in the desired way.
5. Find one small positive aspect of a relationship and focus and build on it.
6. Accept what is offered and build on that; don't look for large initial changes.

7. Do not try to interpret the meaning of causes of behavior and motives, insight does not lead to behavior changes. Work on the behavior itself.²⁵

Although number seven sounds similar to behavior modification, the techniques cited in numbers 1-6 which are used in bringing about change are quite different than techniques used in behavior modification.

In using any of these interventions, the general procedure is to identify solvable problems, set goals, design interventions to achieve those goals, examine the outcome. . . . to see if it has been effective. The therapist must be acutely sensitive and responsive to the patient and his social field, but how he proceeds must be determined by himself.²⁶

This therapeutic technique is not useful when the goal is personal growth or a more general, overall goal. It is useful for a specific problem or behavior that is not helpful and needs to be changed.

The concept of second order change is important to the area of brief therapy within the systems approach and is helpful when straightforward, direct methods of problem solving meet with resistance. It involves reframing the problem so that "there is often a paradoxical element in the process of change."²⁷ Brown and Christensen quote Peggy Papp, who "describes three steps in giving a paradoxical directive: (1) clearly explain the benefits the symptom provides to the family. . . ; (2) prescribe the symptom. . . ; and (3) restrain the family when it begins to show improvement."²⁸

In working with an especially negative person in a congregation, a paradoxical directive might be to explain the benefits of negative, complaining behavior to the person, request that the person be especially negative at a certain time each Sunday, or at a particular time during the week, and then to caution or restrain the person if they

show any sign of change in their behavior.

Summary

The systems approach to marriage and family counseling emerged as a result of new ways of thinking about the entire social structure. This new thinking, in turn, was a response to the explosion of information made possible by new technologies and the advance in computers and other communication methods.

The systems approach looks at the entire system, and then the function of each of the parts, to determine the nature of relationships within the system. Five basic concepts of the systems approach as noted by Friedman are the identified patient, homeostasis, differentiation of the self, the extended family field, and emotional triangles. Each of these concepts was briefly described, and the church congregation in this study analyzed according to each concept.

A short explanation of brief therapy and an example of how a paradoxical directive might be used within a congregation concluded the chapter.

Notes

Chapter 3

1. Friedman, 15.
2. Brown and Christensen, 11.
3. Brown and Christensen, 103.
4. Friedman, 22.
5. Jay Haley, Uncommon Therapy (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).
6. Brown and Christensen, 39-46.
7. Brown and Christensen, 20-21.
8. Brown and Christensen, 21.
9. Friedman, 19.
10. Friedman, 19-20.
11. Brown and Christensen, 12.
12. Friedman, 24.
13. Friedman, 26.
14. Friedman, 27.
15. Friedman, 29.
16. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 2.
17. Friedman, 27.
18. Friedman, 31.
19. Friedman, 34-35.
20. Friedman, 35.

21. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 151-68.
22. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 159-61.
23. Brown and Christensen, 122.
24. Haley, Uncommon Therapy, 21.
25. Haley, Uncommon Therapy, 24-39.
26. Haley, Uncommon Therapy, 17.
27. Watzlawick, Weakland, and Fisch, 83.
28. Brown and Christensen, 98-99.

CHAPTER 4

Ethical and Theological Considerations

The Purpose and Importance of this Chapter

This chapter will investigate ethical and theological considerations involved in using the systems theory of marriage and family counseling when working with complex interpersonal interactions found within the local congregation.

A statement was recently made at a United Methodist Church Board of Ordained Ministry meeting, "There are no easy appointments."¹ I found out how true that statement was when, as a pastor just out of seminary, I was appointed to an ethnic church with a history of interpersonal discord. Whatever church a pastor is assigned to, or answers a call from, it is probable that at some point skills in conflict resolution will be needed. The pastor may also have to deal with difficult and/or dysfunctional interpersonal relationships among the members of the congregation. It is my thesis that systems theory of marriage and family counseling will provide skills that enable pastors to find constructive ways to deal with these relationships. Since the application of the systems theory is outside the traditional way of thinking about how a pastor approaches the congregation, it is important to look at the ethical and theological implications of using this methodology in working with a congregation.

Ethical IssuesFair Exchange and Social Control .

Fair exchange. Jay Haley presents the main ethical issues in the field of problem solving therapy as "within the area of fair exchange, which involves issues common to any business or profession, or within the area of the control of information, which is especially important in the therapy enterprise. Fair exchange is the balance between what one receives and what one gives."² Ethical issues which pertain to fair exchange center around how to measure what the therapist gives and what the client receives. The therapeutic field is a humanitarian one in which the therapist serves to help people who are in need, but it is difficult to measure proper service.

It can be argued the good in human relations is an equal balance of rewards, and that evil is unfair exchange. After therapy, if either client or therapist has given more than he has received, this imbalance indicates an ethical problem. What complicates the issue for many therapists is the obscurity of the therapeutic goal and therefore an uncertainty whether fair exchange has occurred.³

Haley further states that therapies in which the goal is understanding or growth have a much more difficult time determining whether the therapy has been effective than does a problem solving approach, where effectiveness can be measured by the presence or absence of the presenting problem.

Although the argument for fair exchange between therapist and client sounds plausible, there might be some problem in application of this theory to both the therapeutic and church context. First, the therapist and the pastor are both in so called helping professions. It would seem that fair exchange might look different in both the therapeutic setting or the church as compared to business, trade, and politics. The church is not only a relational system but an organization

which provides experiences which result in spiritual growth and awareness. The concept of spiritual growth is closer to the therapeutic concept of personal growth, and Haley does state that it is difficult to measure growth as a therapeutic goal. Haley concentrates on brief therapy, which works with problem solving in specific situations, and which provide behavioral change which is concrete and measurable. However, it is also true that spiritual growth may be a result of behavioral change.

More important, the pastor's role as helper is not modeled on a one-to-one exchange rate, but on the concept of God's grace. This is love and acceptance as exemplified in Christ, which is most often characterized as being freely given, not expecting anything in return. We must note also that Christ included strict demands on some people (the rich young ruler in Matt. 19:16-26 [Mark 10:17-31 and Luke 18:18-30]; the cleansing of the temple in Matt. 21:12-17 [Mark 11:15-19, Luke 19:45-48, John 2:13-22]), and on some people he was exceptionally lenient (the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-11). It seems that fair exchange would be extremely difficult to define for pastors, given the biblical example of Jesus and the context of the church. And, on the most basic level, although pastors are paid, most also work above and beyond what a fair rate of exchange could possibly be for the wages they are paid.

Fair exchange might be applicable on a case-by-case assessment in a specific problem solving situation, but the usefulness of this concept in an overall context would be extremely limited.

John Rawls, in a paper on rule-utilitarianism, points the way to another ethical understanding which is pertinent in this situation.

Rawls shows "the importance of the distinction between justifying a practice and justifying a particular action falling under it, and . . . explains . . . the logical basis of this distinction and how it is possible to miss its significance."⁴ In a theory of utilitarianism which he calls practice conception, Rawls presents the view that "rules are pictured as defining a practice"⁵ rather than being derived from accepted norms based on common practice within a culture, which he calls the summary view.⁶ This is important, for if the rules which govern a group, or system, come from within the group, there is no room for a greater truth, or ultimate truth coming from outside the group or system. In the church, the rules which govern the system come from outside the system, from the Biblical example of Jesus or other Biblical writings, as well as from church tradition and from expectations of the particular congregation. Especially at times of conflict and stress, to have general rules derived through the theory of practice conception as a guide to behavior within the system seems to allow for alternative ways of eliciting that behavior from the members of the group while still providing general guidelines. This would be more consistent with pastoral leadership which seeks to shape the congregation according to Biblical example or spiritual laws, and also allows for the use of therapeutic techniques when indicated.

Social control. Haley also brings up the area of social control as an ethical issue. When poor people are given therapy through government supported clinics they are less likely to cause trouble in the society. Therapists want to help people, but it is difficult to define the line between helping and encouraging socially conformist behavior.⁷ Another area that is ethically fuzzy is required therapy for those individuals

who are "defined as psychotic and make trouble, but not enough trouble to be legally put in jail. . . . The difference between therapy and social control hinges on who benefits from the procedures."⁸

Corey, Corey and Callanan present an overview of ethical issues in their book, Professional and Ethical Issues in Counseling and Psychotherapy. They present views which, like Haley, question whether or not therapeutic goals should be aimed at training people to conform to the status quo or social norms. They take the position of Jourard: "Rather, Jourard believes, the therapist's goal should be to help clients understand and go beyond the situations that restrict their responsible exercise of freedom. If therapists become agents of the status quo, they hinder their clients' efforts to become healthy, growing persons."⁹

The Coreys present this view as the overall approach into which either a strategic behavior-centered therapy or relationship-oriented therapy could fit. They note that "practicing counselors can integrate the 'two psychological worlds' by using behavioristic techniques to accomplish humanistic goals."¹⁰

The above arguments have great implications for the church context, which often is one that tends to preserve both the status quo of the congregation and the society. It is a great challenge to bring about an environment in which pastors, like therapists, could "function as 'responsible anarchists' who are committed to an endless search for ways to live that fosters growth, well-being, idiosyncrasy, freedom, and authenticity."¹¹

In the church context this is important, for our goals center both on spiritual and personal growth as well as building a functional

organizational system. It would seem that utilizing psychological tools will help to accomplish these overall goals.

Controlling Information

Controlling information is an ethical issue which has to do with boundaries between persons in relationships, and with how much information the therapist releases or withholds after interviews with family members. The therapist has control over that information, and that control places him or her in a hierarchical position outside the family. When dealing with an individual or with families, Haley places much importance on the role of natural amnesia. Haley states that we often know what an underlying problem is, but we conceal it from ourselves for very good reasons.¹² Therefore, Haley states, to explain a problem in a straightforward way to a client is therefore disrespectful and counterproductive. If we could fix a problem just by knowing about it, therapy wouldn't be necessary. Therefore, the therapist acts as the gatekeeper for information with individuals, between marital partners, between members of the nuclear family, and between the individual or family and the community.¹³

Clergy, like therapists, belong to the helping professions. Clergy are paid for services rendered, and are privy to much confidential information. This places the pastor in a powerful position in the congregation as gate-keeper of information and the one able to establish hierarchies and keep boundaries. The pastor therefore functions in a very similar way to the therapist in family therapy. Haley presents a model where that kind of authority is essential as long as all people benefit from the situation. When the system is working well, the pastor gets paid, and the congregation gains in functional relationships,

differentiation, and personal and spiritual growth.

Role of the Therapist

Another ethical issue which must be addressed when discussing strategic therapies is the role of the therapist, for it has implications for the role of the pastor in the congregation. Since strategic therapy is directive, it means that the therapist steps in and gives directives to persons or groups, and guides the interaction between the individual and the therapist and between family and group members. As gatekeeper, the therapist has control of information between people. As stated above, this places the therapist in a powerful position. Haley states that this is as it should be.

By actuality or illusion, he [the therapist] should be defined as the one who allows or prevents information to pass. Therefore, his power is enhanced if he is provided with secrets to be protected. The more an individual or group gives a therapist information it wishes concealed, the more power and status the therapist is given. Thus the ethical issues involved in the control of information are an essential aspect of therapy and so cannot be avoided or minimized.¹⁴

With families, Haley states that the family members should be seen alone as well as in the group. "He must have information that he controls at a boundary."¹⁵ It is assumed that a therapist should not side with one person over against another. Haley states that at times this is necessary, for that is the way a gate-keeper functions. "One requirement for the resolution of these apparent paradoxes seems self-evident. The therapist must follow the fundamental rule of not consistently siding with anyone against anyone else. He must provide fair exchange not only between himself and his clientele but also between the sub-systems of clientele."¹⁶ The therapist must paradoxically be able to side successfully with all the individuals or subsystems

within the group. It is then that the therapist can most successfully be an agent for change.

Functioning at the boundary between groups clarifies the relationship between information and hierarchy. Given this view, it follows that a therapist who seeks power and influence over an individual or a group should establish himself as a gate-keeper of information between that group and a larger one.¹⁷

Haley states that many therapists choose to avoid the responsibility for change and push that responsibility onto the client.

[T]hey feel that too much is expected of them if they must judge what is best in the variety of social situations and make decisions for their clientele. They also feel that accepting the responsibility for changing people and keeping their knowledge of what is happening to themselves takes the wisdom of Solomon. . . . Yet if the therapist is trained to be an expert, he should be willing to take responsibility and he should know what should be done in many different situations.¹⁸

The ethical question therefore concerns a "contradiction, or a tension, between the need of the therapist to have power and influence and his need to provide fair exchange."¹⁹ This would also be the ethical question for a pastor applying the systems approach to the church. The pastor is already a gatekeeper for information between groups, and the systems approach gives him or her a structure within which to use that information to bring about change within the congregation. Although some information would be articulated in the group, much information would not. As Haley stated above, whether or not the information is used ethically would be determined by who benefits from how the systems approach is used. If more options emerge, if people become more differentiated, and if free choice of those in the congregation is increased, the gate-keeper has performed in a way that can be said to be ethically good.

Other Ethical Considerations

Corey states that the ideal characteristics of the therapist include:

1. Good will. 2. The ability to be present for others. 3. A recognition and acceptance of their personal power. . . . 4. The knowledge that they have found their own way. 5. A willingness to be vulnerable and to take risks. 6. Self-respect and self-appreciation. 7. A willingness to serve as models for their clients. 8. A willingness to risk making mistakes and to admit having made them. 9. A growth orientation. The most effective counselors remain open to the possibility of broadening their horizons instead of telling themselves they have 'arrived.' . . . They are committed to a continual search for self awareness, and they know that an appreciation of their own limitations, strengths, fears, and vulnerabilities is essential if they are to foster this kind of self-understanding in their clients.²⁰

These traits are listed by Corey as a composite ideal which can be a starting point for reflection on our own struggle to become a more effective therapist. It is stressed that no one person can live up to everything in this composite.²¹

It is instructive to have this list, for it points to the same sense of wholeness which allows for relationships of respect and dignity that systems theory teaches. This also opens relationships up in the same way in which Jesus does when he relates to people on all social and economic levels with respect and caring. Christianity offers grace and forgiveness when falling short of the ideal, but those who follow in Christ's path, even the most humble of servants, have a sense of their own personal power that enables them to take incredible risks which allow for relational wholeness. This is evident in the lives of Ghandi and Martin Luther King, Jr., who were powerful leaders. This kind of authenticity and personal power is necessary if clergy are to be powerful leaders of churches in need of guidance.

Effective counselors recognize their personal power . . . in

the sense that they are in contact with their own strength and vitality. . . . Counselors will be most effective if they feel like "winners." . . . [T]hey should have a strong sense of self-worth that enables them to relate to others out of their strengths rather than out of their weaknesses.²²

The Christian gospel states that God has given us life, and that we live out of love, grace and complete acceptance. Problems arise when we live as if we need to apologize for who we are and our beliefs. We need not fear personal power that enables us to take risks, for therapists and clergy "will accomplish little if they rarely take the chance of failing." ²³

Interpersonal relationships which are problems in the congregation are often characterized by power struggles. These power struggles can keep people occupied so they cannot be concerned with other matters, and the pastor cannot get beyond them because he or she is busy putting out brush fires while the entire forest is burning to the ground. The personal power that Jesus preaches, and which the Coreys present, is never meant to dominate or exploit others. When therapists feel confident and alive, they have no need to diminish others or feel superior to them. "They recognize that two people in a relationship can both be powerful, and they don't have to assume a superior role to feel competent. Indeed, one of their aims is to help clients discover their own autonomy and competence." ²⁴

Although autonomy sounds like a very good goal, Edwin Friedman states that differentiation "should not be confused with autonomy or narcissism. . . . Differentiation means the capacity to be an 'I' while remaining connected."²⁵ Perhaps we are ready to envision a shift from autonomy, which often leads to loneliness and separation, to differentiation which maintains connection to the system and therefore

has the potential to ease some of the separation common in our modern social structure.

Another qualification of these characteristics must be made when considering the expectations and function of a pastor in the black church tradition. In the black church, the pastor is very much an authoritarian figure, one who does not admit to making mistakes or the possibility of weaknesses. The pastor is not humble or a servant, but a leader who is in a hierarchical position above those on his staff and in the congregation. It is a priestly role, with separation from the congregation in order to maintain the mystique of the role. The pastor is also a father-figure, and is expected to have answers to questions raised by the faithful followers.²⁶ This places stress on persons who fill that role, and it is my experience that the fraternity among black pastors is exceptionally strong and gives much needed support to mortals fulfilling a superhuman function.

Manipulation

Strategic therapy is directive, and when it first appeared in the 1950s there was much criticism by the majority of therapists whose ethic stated that it was not proper to intervene in the client's or patient's life. Therapists modeling Freud and Rogers followed a more passive, reflective interaction with their clients, and thought that the directive nature of family therapies was overstepping proper bounds of intervention. However, as strategic therapies have become popular and have shown results, they have become increasingly accepted and have impacted other therapeutic techniques.

Jay Haley discusses this issue and states that it is impossible to "do therapy without manipulating people in the sense of influencing them

to change, since change is the purpose of therapy. . . . The question remains of how much of the therapist's maneuvering he should do outside the patient's awareness either by concealing information about his strategy or by using distraction techniques."²⁷ Haley states that videotapes of therapy sessions have shown how complex the interaction is between the therapist and client, through voice intonation, body language and innuendo.²⁸ Especially in brief therapy where the "therapist does not want the person to change because he says so"²⁹ but would like the person to spontaneously change, the therapist must arrange a situation so the patient initiates the change. In order to do this the therapist may intentionally create an ambiguous situation with the use of paradox to encourage the client to rebel against the therapist. Haley presents this situation and also presents the question of whether this is ethical behavior.³⁰ There is no answer presented, except to leave the reader with a strong sense that if the use of paradox brings about the needed change it is an ethical behavior, and not to use the technique and therefore not bring about the needed change would be the more unethical behavior. This can be evaluated in terms of the fair exchange ethic presented at the beginning of this chapter, for to bring about a needed change seems to be the most fair exchange possible in the situation. Evaluation must also be made as to how the needed change fits into the general rules and expectations as outlined by Rawls in his theory of practice conception, or whether or not the rules themselves must be changed. Rawls states:

One has, in principle, full option to use the guides or to discard them as the situation warrants without one's moral office being altered in any way. . . . If one seeks to question these rules, then one's office undergoes a fundamental change: one then assumes the office of one empowered to change and criticize the rules, or the office of a reformer.³¹

This was often Jesus' position within the Jewish tradition, and can serve as a model when the pastor questions the status quo within the Christian tradition as it is lived out in the present time.

For the pastor who wishes to use strategic therapeutic methods within the congregation, the issue of whether or not he or she is being manipulative or deceptive is a new twist on an old (persistent) problem. Whenever religious practices have had mystery or secrecy as part of the cultural expression, manipulation quite easily can occur. One example of probable manipulation of the congregation and populace would be in the Christian tradition in the Catholic church during times when only the priests knew the latin Bible and were thought to be the only ones who could commune directly with the divine. Manipulation also can occur in any therapy, reflective or directive, when the therapist chooses goals which do not seem to fit the problem or the situation of the person being treated. When the church is at its best it is, like therapy at its best, it is "basically a process that teaches people how to be honest with themselves."³² Therefore, the only ethical position is for the pastor or therapist to develop a system in which interpersonal relationships between clergy and congregation, and among those in the congregation, which allow for honesty and open dialogue.

Sidney Jourard contrasts manipulation with dialogue in counseling. He sees psychotherapy as "an invitation to authenticity" in which the therapist's role is to be an exemplar. Therapists can foster their clients' honesty and invite them to drop their pretenses only by dropping their own and meeting their clients in an honest manner. . . . If counselors manipulate their clients, they can expect manipulation in return; if they are open, however, their clients may be open as well.³³

The challenge to the pastor is to drop his or her pretenses first, and by so doing encourage those in the congregation to do the same. In

addition, the pastor has the responsibility to develop the programs and events in the life of the congregation in ways which foster and encourage the dropping of pretenses. In this way, authentic relationships will more likely be formed, manipulation will not occur, and the pastor will influence the congregation in positive ways.

The above discussion is not placed in the context of the systems approach or that of brief therapy, where withholding information or intentional use of paradox is used to bring about needed change to improve dysfunctional relationships. Rather, it seems to present the ideal model of a system, where relationships are functioning at their best, with a high level of trust. It is therefore a goal to reach for, and an ideal to work toward. Again, the ethic of fair exchange within utilitarian practice conception in which all benefit is a guideline which can be used. This is the ideal normative state of the congregation, and the overall goal of the pastor would be to bring about and maintain such a system. If that ideal situation does not exist, or if there is an area within the congregation where improvement is needed, the pastor is justified in using the techniques of the systems approach to marriage and family counseling in order to help bring about a community in which relationships are functional. In this situation, if the pastor does not use techniques available, the pastor has not provided fair exchange and therefore has behaved in an unethical manner.

In the above situation, the pastor is forced into a role which inhibits honest dialogue and maintains separation. Whether or not, and to what extent, this system could be challenged might depend on the proportion of members in the congregation desiring change, the willingness of the pastor to fit into existing expectations, and how

much conflict exists within the system.

Values

Corey, Corey and Callanan and John C. Hoffman are all concerned with the ethical nature of how a therapist's values influence the therapeutic setting. The Coreys explore values which a therapist might hold in the areas of right to death, religion, the family, sex roles and sex-role stereotypes, and sexuality. In each case, different biases are explored, with special attention to the "issue of converting clients to your values and value conflicts in counseling."³⁴ This is significant, for as the issues are presented and possible positions of therapists given through case examples, it becomes clear that the biases of the therapist are important. Is it ethical to impose values? Can values be stated clearly, yet allow the client to explore options not valued by the therapist? The authors favor a position in which both the therapist and the client operate on a feeling level where non-judgmental, accepting dialogue takes place. The authors state:

The central theme of this chapter has been the importance of being clear about what you value. We've suggested that counselors cannot be neutral in the area of values and should frankly acknowledge those values that are related to questions clients are struggling with. It takes honesty and courage to recognize how your values affect the way you counsel, and it takes wisdom to determine when you cannot work with a client because of a clash of values. These questions have no ready-made or universally appropriate answers. They demand ongoing introspection and discussions with supervisors or colleagues to determine how to make the optimal use of your values.³⁵

John C. Hoffman in Ethical Confrontation in Counseling presents the thesis that to be mentally whole, we must confront moral values. He states that the counseling professions, which have taught therapists that they could be morally neutral and fully accepting, do morally impact clients through subtle responses. To effect healing, Hoffman

states that that impact must be recognized, and moral values recognized in both the therapist and client.³⁶

Hoffman first outlines a theological model of justification by faith which unites justification and sanctification, acceptance and moral challenge through a discussion of the reformation views of grace and the law. He then presents background material on views of morality in the psychological theories of Freud and Rogers. In both religion and psychotherapy, there is tension between complete acceptance of another and finding oneself bound by laws and expectations.

For Hoffman, the power of the Christian gospel is seen in the statement by Tillich, "You are accepted,³⁷ accepted by that which is greater than you, the name of which you do not know." The power of the therapeutic relationship is also seen in complete acceptance of the client by the therapist. However, in religious experience there is a moral imperative (the law) within complete grace which has long been recognized. Hoffman argues for recognition of a moral imperative which already exists in psychotherapy, and which parallels the moral imperative in religion. In both cases, the ethical imperative comes from beyond our own unique experience, for it is not the content of the confrontation which gives it power, but the moral confrontation itself. The power of that confrontation comes from ultimate reality, that is, from God.

[I]t is the actual encounter more than the perfection of our theological formulations, the experience of a morally alluring graciousness at the heart of life more than knowledge of the name 'Jesus,' which ultimately heals. The counselor's task is to be an instrument mediating this encounter which religious men have called a meeting with God, an experience of faith."³⁸

Thus, the therapists "ethical interventions can witness to more than his

own limited perception of such truth."³⁹

Hoffman states that the fact that both ultimate acceptance and moral confrontation come from a reality beyond ourselves, from God, need not be recognized. There is "an empowering acceptance at the heart of life. Whether or not therapist or patient recognizes this fact, this is the reality which is at work."⁴⁰ In each case, religious experience and the therapeutic relationship, we encounter the love and forgiveness of God. The moral imperative also rises from God, not from society. "[T]he Reformers experienced a harmonization of justification and sanctification, of acceptance and challenge, in the reality they called faith."⁴¹

Therefore, whether in the religious or therapeutic context, Hoffman sees the same elements of encounter with the ultimate other taking place. He states that it is in this encounter itself, not the names or labels we give to the encounter, that healing and wholeness occur.

In order for wholeness and healing to take place, there is "an unambiguous positive attraction toward a moral yet gracious other. If we are not moved by wholehearted love for that moral authority and its standards, then we live under the tyranny of the negative conscience."⁴² It is wholeness and healing which the church and psychotherapy are striving to bring about, and Hoffman states that for both to effect that healing, they must provide this encounter with complete acceptance and love and a gracious moral authority.

This position assumes a functional system of relationships within the Christian and therapeutic context. However, if relationships are not functional, the systems approach states that it takes more than an open dialogue within a framework of mutual respect for relationships to

develop from dysfunctional into functional relationships. Haley would say that it takes much more than attraction to the ultimate other to build a relationship, for attraction alone does not bring about change. Neither would acceptance alone. This has reference to the debate between therapies which work for understanding and awareness vs. those that seek to change behavior and take a more strategic approach. The systems approach brings a more systematic, problem solving approach to the organization while working to achieve wholeness and healing. However, the systems theory also states that awareness itself does nothing when trying to bring about specific changes within the system. Providing opportunities for authentic encounter with the divine may be enough in some contexts, and will provide very real spiritual growth, but will not be adequate in situations where interpersonal problems exist or where long-standing dysfunctional relationships need to be challenged.⁴³

This concept of change challenges a theological position which teaches that the gospel of love is acceptance of each individual just as they are. The teaching often stops there, instead of continuing to its completion where great demands are placed on the individual. Ultimate surrender of the individual's life to Christ is the ending place of the gospel, where the individual's will is totally given over to God's will. Life changes and changes in individual value systems, as well as motivation for mission, are often a result of this total surrender. It would seem that this is consistent with the demands made within the systems approach to counseling.

The Christian gospel is always relational, emphasizing relationship with God, and community among people and with all life forms within the creation. In the systems approach, differentiation of the "I" is very

important, but so is continued connection with those in the system, for the "I" is always related to the larger system. In that respect it is relational in the same way as the Christian gospel, The "I" must deal with finding the most functional place between complete autonomy and complete absorption within the system.

It would seem that in the church the question of values is an especially important issue. The church does not claim to be an impartial observer, or value free. On the contrary, the church sets about teaching values and moral positions, even though churches and pastors do not always agree on what those values are or should be. However, it seems that the most ethical position is to be as clear as possible about values, and to relate those values in as open a way as possible to the congregation.

It takes honesty and courage to recognize how a pastor's values affect the way he or she ministers. Any intervention taken in the congregation must be based on understanding of those values. The values and life experience of the congregation must be looked at with respect, just as the therapist must respect the values and life experience of the client, even, and perhaps especially, if the therapist then decides to challenge those values. The authors do not give pat answers, but push us to clarify beliefs and to see how those beliefs influence interaction with others.

If it is important for a counselor or therapist to accept clients for who they are, how much more important is it for the pastor to accept the parishioner and work from an honest emotional level. Haley states that it does no good to deceive clients, for they will sense any attempt at deception and find out about it anyway.⁴⁴ It takes great faith to

operate out of the above guidelines, but the Christian gospel teaches that we are to live by faith. If we are honest about what we value, and relate to others on the feeling level, we trust that the Holy Spirit will be at work in our lives and in those to whom we minister.

Goals of Therapy and Ministry

"Aimless therapy is unlikely to be effective. . .,"⁴⁵ the Coreys state, and then go on to discuss possible goals of therapy, how goals are determined, and who should determine them. Responsible goals "help clients understand and go beyond the situations that restrict their responsible exercise of freedom."⁴⁶ Quoting S. Jourard in Disclosing Man to Himself (1968), they state that therapists function at their best when they guide clients toward "liberation from the clutch of the past" and from the "bewitching effects of social pressure." If therapists become agents of the status quo, they hinder their clients' efforts to become healthy, growing persons.⁴⁷

Corey also states that one way to handle the issue of who sets counseling goals is to decide on the general goals you have for all your clients and then provide time in your sessions for exploring the specific reasons individual clients are in counseling. What the goals are and how actively involved the client is in determining them will depend to a great extent on the type of counseling provided.⁴⁸

One of the goals of the systems theory of marriage and family counseling is to work with dysfunctional family systems to help them change to become more functional. This is an example of a general goal from which a therapist will work. In all family systems theories, whether they emphasize the structure of the family, transgenerational relationships, behavior of the members, or a strategy for bringing about change,⁴⁹ therapeutic intervention "enables members of the family to

improve their communication patterns, [and] the ultimate result is functional family behavior."⁵⁰ If we in the church are to have as a goal the creation of community in which respectful dialogue can flourish, the primary goal must be to create and/or sustain that community. Systems theory is about the creation of just that kind of community, where individuals have increased responsible autonomy within the system, tolerance toward the other members, a clear sense of themselves and who they are, and have skills for functional communication.

To this end, family therapy provides an ethical guideline for responsible intervention and direction. This is based on the work of Salvatore Minuchin, who explored the structural aspects of the family system. "The structural approach focuses on how the family organizes itself, on how its members communicate, and on how dysfunctional patterns develop."⁵¹ According to Minuchin,

the tool of structural family therapy is to modify the present. . . . [F]amily therapists join that system and then use themselves to transform it. [T]he family system is organized around certain functions of its members (such as support, nurturing, control, and socializing). . . . [T]he therapist joins the family not to educate or socialize it, but rather to repair or modify the family's own functioning so that it can better perform these tasks'.⁵²

The therapist uses his position of power and influence to establish rapport and join the family in deciphering the communication patterns, in that process eliminating dysfunctional and destructive interactional patterns.

The systems approach of strategic therapy goes even further in developing specific goals. Although the above discussion is adequate for goals of ministry and direction of the programs of the church, in some situations a more specific, directive approach may be needed. Especially when the system is not functioning well, or there is a specific problem

to be solved, a strategic approach would be indicated.

Ethical Basis for Intervention in a Congregation

The situation in the church being considered was very clear: there was a problem. Almost everyone in the congregation agreed to that fact. Before you had conversed very long, a complaint, concern, or a confidence extended about someone who was a problem emerged. Also, there was overall concern about the attendance on Sunday morning.

This was not a case of a few small complaints, it seemed to be the overall attitude of most people in the congregation. The situation was so severe that I seriously contemplated quitting the ministry, and I was concerned that the church itself, which was struggling financially as well as programatically, would not survive. This was a true borderline situation which Helmut Thielicke explores in Theological Ethics, Vols. 1 and 2. A borderline situation may call for extreme measures, simply to insure survival. I was aware that I would not survive long as a pastor without help in this situation.⁵³

At first, I tried to ignore all the negative comments thinking that if we worked on some positive goals for the church, and organized some positive programming for people to be involved in, it would simply go away. This is an approach recommended by Kennon Callahan in Twelve Keys to an Effective Church.⁵⁴ It is a valuable approach, but in this situation, the church did not respond as I had hoped even though we were able to begin several important ministry programs.

It was at the beginning of my second year at the church that I first studied the systems approach to marriage and family counseling, and read the book Generation to Generation by Edwin Friedman. I found an entirely new perspective with which I could approach the church, one

which created emotional distance to that I could extricate myself from the middle of the turmoil, but be involved and give leadership. It also gave some specific ways of approaching problems, which looked promising. I learned that doing more of what had already been tried was not going to solve problems, something new must destabilize the system in order to create a climate in which the congregation could become unstuck and regroup in a more positive way.

I was more than ready to try this strategic approach where second-order change could be evoked, and the underlying stresses and concerns of the high level of emotional reactivity could be taken into consideration and dealt with. To allow the congregation to continue in disaray, promoting dysfunctional relationships which were very destructive to the pastor and to the members was totally out of the question for me. If I left the congregation without addressing the situation, I would only pass the problems on to the next person, who would have to learn the situation and hopefully try something else.

To use methods of the systems approach would allow for the possibility of a more functional congregation in which people would be less emotionally reactive and more differentiated. This seemed the best, and most ethically correct way to proceed, for it had the possibility of bringing about change which would allow the church increased options for functional relationship and ministry.

This became my goal for the relationships within the congregation and for the people of the congregation in relationship with me as their pastor. I never expressed this goal to anyone in the church, although I discussed what I was doing with several people outside the church context who were familiar with the systems approach. It seemed

unnecessary at the time to reveal specific ideas for intervention to the congregation, for it was something new and I was unsure of where it would lead. Later, I read the discussion by Jay Haley about respecting the unconscious knowledge of the other person, which is the ethical position for not revealing the specific strategy. In this case, it was also good common sense.⁵⁵ At the same time, there was education going on within the congregation about the systems perspective, and general goals of ministry consistent with overall guidelines presented by Corey and Hoffman above were established. The ministry of the church continued during this time.

Summary

The main ethical issues presented concern fair exchange and withholding of information, the rule-utilitarian concept of practice conception of John Rawls, the role of the therapist and pastor, manipulation by a therapist compared to a strategic directive used to bring about needed change in a system, and a discussion of values and how our own values affect how we work with people as clients and in a congregation. A short discussion of goals and what kind of goals are needed for the general overall working of the system in contrast to those needed for specific problems is included. A statement about how these ethical issues influenced my approach with the congregation in this study ends the chapter.

Notes

Chapter 4

1. The Rev. Faith Conklin, meditation given at a meeting of the California and Pacific Annual Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, January 1990.

2. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 195.
3. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 196.
4. Rawls, 231.
5. Rawls, 236.
6. Rawls, 235.
7. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 196.
8. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 196.
9. Corey, Corey, and Callanan, 75-6.
10. Corey, Corey, and Callanan, 74.
11. Corey, Corey, and Callanan, 76.
12. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 197-99.
13. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 213.
14. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 218.
15. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 219.
16. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 220.
17. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 218.
18. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 221.
19. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 219.

20. Corey, Corey, and Callanan, 26-7.
21. Corey, Corey, and Callanan, 26.
22. Corey, Corey, and Callanan, 26.
23. Corey, Corey, and Callanan, 27.
24. Corey, Corey, and Callanan, 27.
25. Friedman, 27.
26. Cornish Rogers, personal interview, 28 Jan. 1991.
27. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 200.
28. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 200.
29. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 203.
30. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 203.
31. Rawls, 247.
32. Corey, Corey, and Callanan, 207.
33. Corey, Corey, and Callanan, 208.
34. Corey, Corey, and Callanan, 81.
35. Corey, Corey, and Callanan, 94.
36. John C. Hoffman, Ethical Confrontation in Counseling (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).
37. Hoffman, 106.
38. Hoffman, 106.
39. Hoffman, 107.
40. Hoffman, 107.
41. Hoffman, 106-7.
42. Hoffman, 106.
43. Brown and Christensen, 84.
44. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 202-4.
45. Corey, Corey, and Callanan, 117.
46. Corey, Corey, and Callanan, 119.

47. Corey, Corey, and Callanan, 120.
48. Corey, Corey, and Callanan, 120-21.
49. Brown and Christensen, 17.
50. Virginia Satir, James Stachoviak and Harvey A. Taschman, Helping Families to Change (New York: Jason Aronson, 1975, 1983), 13.
51. Corey, Corey, and Callanan, 154.
52. Corey, Corey, and Callanan, 154.
53. Helmut Thielicke, Theological Ethics: Politics vol. 2 (1969; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979).
54. Callahan, xvii-sviii.
55. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 212-15.

CHAPTER 5

Application of the Systems Approach to the Church

Approach 1: Transgenerational Therapy

Statement of the Problem

The members of a small church congregation were holding on to the memory of the founding pastor of the church, Rev. H, who had started the church twenty years prior to this time. For many members, there was always the hope that he would come back to pastor the church in his retirement, and grief that he had left them. Many people also felt that he had abandoned them after they asked him to come back and pastor the church and he, instead, chose to go to a different church, one of another denomination. The fact that he did go to another church rather than choosing to retire made this rejection all the more intense. This unresolved grief resulted in the members who had known Rev. H being unable to effectively invest in the present ministry. The triangle of relationships included the church members, Rev. H, and the present pastor. Thus, the church members were continually tied to the past, unable to fully invest in the present.

Past Attempted Solutions

The stress of this grief found expression in Mrs. O. As spokesperson for those who were unhappy, she became the identified patient for several groups within the congregation. She truly did have an important job in the system!

Mrs. O and Mr. U were often spokespersons for Mrs. A, the matriarch in the congregation. Formerly, Mrs. A and her friends had been able to run off a number of pastors, or make things so miserable that they had requested to be moved. They were very skilled at this, and although the other people in the congregation did not like their tactics, they did not put a stop to this inappropriate behavior. Therefore, I realized that although many people did not like Mrs. O, they allowed her to express their own unexpressible anger and grief. Each time a pastor was replaced, there was hope that they would find the right leader, but since the new pastor was never Rev. H, he or she was never acceptable for long.

This attempted solution served only to provide a succession of pastors who came to the church each year, or even more frequently. Since the church was small, the previous pastors had all been part-time, either pastoring this church as part of duties assigned as an associate at the founding church, as a less-than-full-time appointment, or in the latest instance, a retired pastor serving ten hours/week.

As a result, since Rev. H had officially left this particular congregation fifteen years prior to 1988, there had been no pastoral leadership that had been totally accepted. When I arrived, the stories about ministry and how to do things were all based on Rev. H's relationship with the congregation. In listening to the stories, it always sounded as if the events had happened recently, and it took a while before I realized there was a long time interval between the remembered events and the present re-telling of them. The people in the church talked about the founding pastor frequently and with great reverence, and always referred to what Rev. H would have done or how he

did things. It took a year to discover that Rev. H's ministry was the model of ministry on which the many suggestions I received were based.

Statement of Concrete Change Desired

People in the congregation will remember the former pastor with love and affection, but will also be able to see the present pastor as the one to whom they will look for support and leadership. This will be measured by how much the people express themselves in terms of how Rev. H did things.

Strategy

The twentieth anniversary of the founding of the community center was to take place during the year of this study. My proposal was to have a celebration honoring the former pastor on that anniversary, with recognition of his unique contributions. This was consistent with black church tradition, and also would satisfy the need for affirming the churches cultural heritage (see discussion in Chapter 2). Although the stated purpose of the day was the anniversary celebration, the underlying motive was to deal with grief resulting from the founding pastor leaving and not returning to pastor the church when he retired from the mother church. This underlying motive was never expressed to the congregation. It would have been disrespectful to the people to tell them what they already knew, but could not express themselves.¹ Rev. H would be asked to attend the celebration in person to receive recognition and honors from the congregation.

Report of this Strategy

The project was proposed by the pastor to several people informally, with affirmative reactions. The systems theory motive behind the celebration was not disclosed. The project was then proposed to, and

passed by, the Administrative Board, the ruling body of the church.

Next, an ad hoc committee to work on the event was formed. Most of the old-timers who were around for the founding of the church and knew Rev. H best were selected to be on the committee. Although the Administrative Board had asked several people to act as co-chairpersons and form the committee, one of the parishoners took it upon herself to announce in church that she had appointed a committee chairperson. It turned out that Mrs. A had orchestrated this move, and that Mr. U, one of her spokespersons, was that chairperson. Mr. U became a figurehead for Mrs. H, who ran the celebration and dinner reception from behind the scenes. It is precisely those people who had not been able to let go of the former pastor, and for whom the event had the most significance.

Unfortunately, it was at this point that Rev. H, who had been in ill health for several years, became critically ill, was hospitalized, and died. It was decided to go ahead with the celebration as planned, even though a few people thought it was in poor taste because the church had never given any formal recognition to Rev. H during his lifetime. As the present pastor, I took a strong stand for continuing with our plans, making sure that the surviving family was informed of our concern. The family was in favor of continuing with the celebration, and several members of the family agreed to attend our celebration and speak on behalf of Rev. H and the family.

It was of utmost importance that the celebration continue. If the event needed to be a means to deal with unresolved grief built up over the past fifteen years, that grief would never be resolved if it was not addressed at the time of Rev. H's death.

The church had been in need of some repairs (plastering and

painting in the sanctuary) for several years, and the trustees made arrangements for those to be done. A significant effort was made to invite neighboring churches, friends of Rev. H, and musicians who had known him. In addition, one of the church leaders secured a recent formal photograph of Rev. H which would be enlarged and presented to the church, and the education building would be renamed in honor of Rev. H.

The service itself was reminiscent of the funeral service for Rev. H held several months before, which only one or two of the church members had attended. The music chosen for the celebration was the favorite music of Rev. H, much of which had been used at his funeral. The guest preacher was a former colleague of Rev. H who spoke about the ministry of Rev. H. A portion of the offering was designated to go into a memorial fund for Rev. H.

The service, held on a Sunday afternoon at 3:00 p.m., was well attended, the music was beautiful and moving, the preacher stirring, and the family spoke eloquently about Rev. H and how much this church had meant to him. The portrait was unveiled to "o-o-o's" and "ah-ah-ah's," and everyone repaired to the social hall for an elaborate supper after the worship service. The entire church looked beautiful after the interior plastering and painting. The people were all proud of themselves, I was proud of them, and afterward we all agreed that the program was wonderful and that the occasion was a great success.

What began as a celebration of Rev. H's ministry, to constructively open feelings of grief at thinking themselves abandoned by the pastor, functioned as a memorial service after his death. It also provided a tangible way for those in the congregation of work through feelings of guilt and anger which are a part of the grieving process.

After the program, it was very infrequent to hear how Rev. H would have done things. The photograph was hung in a prominent spot, and people see it and remember Rev. H fondly. However, he is not mentioned as frequently, especially in reference to what should happen in the church's present ministry. As pastor, I found it much easier to design programs and give leadership based on the present status of the church and congregation.

Systems Analysis

The tendency of a system is to maintain homeostasis, or balance. This results in the members of the system functioning in certain ways in order to maintain that balance. Since the system tries to maintain a balance, it helps explain why systems are resistant to change.²

This church was stuck in a homeostatic condition tied to the past, with Rev. H a permanent part of the relational structure. This placed the entire system in a transgenerational dilemma. Key theoretical concepts involved in transgenerational family therapy are that "(1) the past is active in the present and (2) evolution has left us with a primitive emotional system and a more recently evolved reasoning system."³ Here, the past was active in the present through loyalty to Rev. H, and the people within the system were unable to distance themselves from Mrs. O, the identified patient, who was the focal point of unexpressed grief for the congregation. When a person began blaming Mrs. O for the state of the church as so often happened, other people jumped right in, for it gave them a chance to release their own stress over unexpressed grief without rationally acknowledging what was going on. It was an unconscious process, which was repeated over and over again within the congregation.

The founding of the church, originally a community center, was Rev. H's idea. He was the motivating force behind the organization, and his was the leadership that made the project a success. Although it was the people who were invested in the community center who wanted it to become a church, Rev. H never conceived of it as anything other than a community center.⁴ The church leaders pushed through the formal organization of their church, with Rev. H the much revered pastor finally, and somewhat reluctantly, giving support. Although he had changed his function within the congregation, the people still held to the original position of Rev. H as their pastor. That was the homeostasis which they desired, and Rev. H was the past minister actively functioning in the minds of the people although he was physically removed and too ill to be involved personally in any way. Although the people knew that Rev. H was ill (their rational mind accepted that he was ill), they still hoped for his recovery and they were emotionally committed to the idea that eventually Rev. W would indeed come back and be their pastor. Words spoken to the congregation which pointed out the facts of the situation would not reach the deep emotional level, where the homeostatic tendencies of the system are lived out, and where we encounter real resistance to change.

Therefore, something which would touch that emotional core, which would put a small chink in the homeostatic armor was necessary. Although the idea of having a special celebration might seem obvious at first, it was not until the realization that the resistance to change was very deep, that simply saying that now was a different time and situation than twenty years ago did not mean that those words made any real impact, and that the need for something which would break the

homeostatic pattern was realized.

What was needed was some degree of congregational differentiation. The people needed to stay connected to the traditions and roots of the system, while also being able to have the sense of being an individual or an "I".⁵ For people who did not know that they were overly connected to Rev. H and grieving over his loss, what better way to begin to differentiate than to acknowledge his rightful place as founder and point to the function he did have in the congregation. When a direct approach either does not work or is inappropriate a paradoxical directive is indicated. In this case it was indicated because simply telling people they were attached to Rev. H would have violated their unconscious desires, and would have resulted in increased stress. In this case, the symptom was prescribed. To point to and emphasize Rev. H's true function within the system would open the way toward moving to differentiation which would in turn open the way toward healing and growth in the congregation. It just happened that planning for the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the church was beginning at the time of this realization, and it seemed like a great opportunity to make use of that celebration for this purpose. Although there was some debate in the Administrative Board meeting over how appropriate it was to center a celebration on one person (even Rev. H), there was almost unanimous consensus in favor of doing after the discussion.

Ethical Considerations

When I first proposed this celebration, it did not enter my mind that there would be any ethical considerations. It simply seemed the obvious thing to do. It was consistent with the black church culture, and did not violate anyone's integrity. However, the fact that there was

information withheld from the congregation must be openly expressed and dealt with, as well as whether or not there was fair exchange.

The information withheld falls well within the area of helpful, permanent unconscious amnesia. "In recent years it has become more accepted to help a person conceal ideas from himself not only for temporary periods but also permanently. We appreciate the value of natural amnesia more now, as we begin to realize that we forget things and overlook matters for sound reasons."⁶ It seems a much more fair exchange to help people to experience a healing event, to enjoy it, to revel in it, to take responsibility for it and therefore be able to reap the full benefit of the experience than to take away from the experience by revealing a motive which would detract from their complete involvement. Such is the case here.

I still have not revealed the healing motive for the celebration to anyone in the congregation, and hope never to have to do so. It seems very important that they take complete ownership of the celebration to experience the emotional catharsis necessary to free them from the homeostatic unbalance they were locked into before the celebration. Therefore, it seems that in all aspects the celebration can be termed ethically good.

Evaluation and Conclusion

Although there is evidence that transgenerational family therapy is effective, it is difficult to measure that effectiveness scientifically.⁷ This case is no different. The realization that the congregation was triangled into the previous pastor through collective grief evolved over a year of talking to many different people. The conversations were therefore not recorded or scientifically measured.

The level of involvement in the celebration was high, and can be measured by the number of people working on different committees, and the attendance at the event.

However, the success of the intervention also is difficult to measure, for again it has come through many conversations over a period of time. Also, Rev. H's death was so near in time to the celebration that there was no one clear intervention; the death itself and the celebration were both major events which contributed to change.

Since the celebration there does seem to be a marked decrease in emotional attachment to Rev. H from the level there was before the celebration. This conclusion was reached because, since the celebration took place, people do not talk about re-living the programs and events that occurred when Rev. H was active in the community center.

Approach 2: Strategic Therapy

Statement of the Problem

Six people in the congregation were extremely negative and blocked attempts to develop programs and efforts to bring in new people. These were the same people who functioned with Mrs. O as the identified patient for the transgenerational involvement with Rev. H, and worked effectively to change pastors frequently. Those six people functioned to keep the congregation in an emotionally reactive state. Whenever things were going smoothly, one of them would be sure to provoke an emotional storm. They would always get a great deal of attention, which reinforced this negative behavior. This crisis was often provoked by Mrs. O, by her rude and angry behavior.

Background of the Problem

When I first studied the systems approach to marriage and family

counseling, I was enthralled, for it gave me a framework with which to both understand and work with the system of the local church. With the work of Friedman in Generation to Generation paving the way,⁸ it seemed that this would provide an imaginative and effective way in which to approach any difficulties in the local church.

The addition of brief therapy as presented by Jay Haley, and based on the work of Milton Erickson, added another workable tool within the systems approach to help when dealing with difficult people.⁹

As stated above, the reason this approach seemed so inviting was that I was the caucasian pastor of a small United Methodist church in Los Angeles where the congregation was ethnically all black. The church had been started as a mission of a larger congregation to the community, and was established as a community center before being an independent church. The church had been unable to adjust to the numerous pastors it had had, and was now also unable to adjust to changes taking place in the congregation through the natural attrition of an aging congregation. The emotional rigidity resulted in some extremely difficult relational patterns within the congregation.

Kennon Callahan states that if five percent of your congregation is bent on being difficult, you are in trouble and something must be done.¹⁰ The average attendance of this church was fifty, and there was one older woman (Mrs. A) who had decided that she was not going to cooperate with anything that was done in the church. She functioned as the ruling matriarch, and had five women followers and one male follower, for a total of seven out of fifty. Since that was clearly more than five percent, I also knew very clearly that the church was in trouble.

Although Mrs. O was the focal point as the most visible negative voice, these six people together functioned as identified patients in the church. The position or function as identified patient included being the gate-keeper for pastors and new members, and the gate was usually closed! They managed to be rude to just about everyone, including me. The long-time members complained about them, and the few new ones who managed to stay for awhile soon were treated rudely, and then either left or threatened to quit. I was repeatedly told by those who wanted to cooperate that these seven people were very proud that they knew better than each pastor that had been there part-time, and that Mrs. A especially had been responsible for several pastors leaving. In my time at the church, several new couples had not been able to integrate into the life of the congregation, and had left. The fact that the church was small, and any other difficulty, was usually blamed on one or more of these people. This situation had existed since the community center and church had existed, for about twenty years! As the size of the congregation had dwindled through the years, the position of these people had become much more prominent, and Mrs. O had become the one everyone blamed for most of the problems in the church.

Analysis of the Problem

This problem is connected with problem one, which is consistent with the basic systems theory that each part within the system affects all the other parts. Here, a strategic approach to the problem will be the basis for analysis and intervention. This approach deals with the symptom itself, rather than the structure or intergenerational connections behind the symptom. Here, the symptom is rude behavior by one of the members in the church. It is important to note that the

system had many members who were involved through undifferentiated and emotionally reactive behavior.¹¹ The people in the congregation were stuck together, even though they couldn't get along with one another.

Statement of Change Desired

Mrs. O would no longer have temper tantrums at church, and Mrs. A would no longer be openly rude. Although there was a concern about the behavior of a group of people, this method concentrates on changing a specific presenting problem, instead of looking at a more general or overall goal.

Past Attempted Solutions

I could determine no previous attempt by the congregation to deal directly (or indirectly) with Mrs. O's or Mrs. A's behavior, or the behavior of the other people in this group. The congregation knew what was going on and put up with it.

First Attempted Solution

With this attempted solution, I fell into the trap which the good guys had been in for all those twenty years. "If only we could get Mrs. H or Mrs. R or Mr. B to change, then things would be different," I thought. I planned on making calls on each of the difficult members, not just Mrs. O, and also planned what I would say to them in the context of our conversations. I thought about wonderfully clever second order changes I could effect by using just the right phrases to jolt them out of their destructive behavior. I would instruct Mrs. O to have her temper tantrums at the same time each Sunday, so that they would do the most good. I would tell Mrs. A that she was being very helpful by being rude, and to keep up the good work.

However, I had not counted on the persistence and determination of

these people. In therapeutic terms, this is known by the term resistance. By the time I knew enough to use brief therapy techniques with them, it was too late. They were not interested in visiting with me, or spending enough time for me to use therapeutic techniques with them. After repeated attempts to make appointments and being rebuffed each time, I realized that this was not the right course of action. Even paradoxical directives must have some framework of relationship within which to work, and there simply was none with these people at this time.

Systems theory states that a system will maintain homeostasis (balance or equilibrium), and that no behavior is without a function or position within the system.¹² When behavior is viewed functionally rather than personally, the first thing that must go is blame---and therefore there is no sense of good guys vs. the bad guys, or us vs. them. When the entire system is examined according to behavioral function, it means that both sides balance each other, and need each other for some reason. If the good guys could not blame the bad guys for keeping the church small, they would have to look at themselves and see what they were and were not doing that contributed to the situation. If the bad guys could not complain about the pastor, they would have to look at themselves. Blame is a very convenient tool to keep one from looking at the self, and to keep any change from occurring. So both sides were helping to keep the system in equilibrium, and both had to share the responsibility for what the system was like!

Second Attempted Solution

With the first attempted solution I had begun with the presenting problem (the identified patients), and therefore with the most resistant

people in the congregation. In brief therapy, when you are faced with a very resistant member of the system, you begin with one very small change in the system, and you make that change with the person or persons who are most amenable to change.

I had begun with the most resistant person in the church, who did not see any need for change except to change pastors. Mrs. O certainly did not see any need for change in herself, nor did Mrs. A or the others in the small clique of six, nor did anyone else in the congregation. They were all a part of the system, and therefore they were all a part of the problem.

I began again, this time with several leaders who seemed to desire that change be made. Mr. and Mrs. M were particularly interested. I spoke with them about the systems approach, and suggested that we make some very small changes. It opened the way for some important dialogue, and we talked and dreamed about what possibilities there might be within the church. I also pointed out that as long as we catered to the whims of a few people who always thwarted plans made by anyone else, we were playing right into their hands. They came to realize how much power had been given to a small sub-group within the congregation.

This was enough to start Mr. and Mrs. M thinking. With the help of Mr. and Mrs. I, the room in which the offering was counted was changed. Most of the identified patients in the group of six were on the finance committee, or were involved in counting the money after church. This change was a major breakthrough. Next, several of the newer members of the finance committee were put on a rotating schedule with the other members of the committee for counting the money after church on Sundays. Another major change. This meant that the people counting the money

(previously the bad guys) could no longer use that time as a private meeting. It also forced members of the two main cliques the church to work together, and even talk to one another.

In an informal conversation with Mrs. M, I expressed the opinion that it was a good time to make a change in the music department. Many people had wanted to change choir directors for several years, and a change was indicated. However, when I arrived as a new pastor, they opened up the discussion about the music program and no one would make a direct statement about the necessity to change choir directors. I did not know which direction to go, and therefore disappointed about half of the people by not firing the music director. However, since no one would say anything specific at the time, it was several months before I understood the situation. Now, with the church less locked into the structure, I made a strong recommendation for a change.

Although I was reappointed before we could take action on the music director, Mrs. M and the SPRC did move on my recommendation. The previous choir director was gracefully let go, and a new person more suited to the present needs of the church hired.

Systems Analysis

Although I was happy to be appointed to my next church, I was also very disappointed to leave the church in this study at the time I did. It seemed that we were making some real change within the congregation, and I would have liked to stay longer to see what would happen next.

Although Mrs. O grumbled a lot, she did cooperate with the changes being made, and her grumbling had less impact than previously. People were willing to both cooperate with the changes and initiate additional small changes even though Mrs. O grumbled and complained. In itself,

that was a major change. Through the changes made, the hierarchy within the church was being restructured, so that Mrs. O had less power to control the emotional climate. A healthier balance was being put into place, with an increase in the number of options in response to events within the congregation. The stress was more evenly distributed throughout the system. "Systems in which the triangles are more fluid can tolerate more conflict (and therefore more creativity) because of that capacity for distribution." ¹³

Beginning with a very small change and with the members most receptive to change was also the right strategy, and allowed the system to shift enough to allow for even greater change. It seemed that people acquired courage after they saw that a small change was possible, and it allowed people to express their own desire for things to happen in a positive way, and gave energy for bringing about other changes.

Evaluation

With strategic therapy, the evaluation of the success of the intervention is whether or not the symptom continues to occur.¹⁴ At the present time, Mrs. O has very few temper outbursts in public, and people do not get upset when she does. The present pastor states that she is very quiet! ¹⁵

This indicates that the interventions were successful in reducing the stress level in the congregation, and bringing about some needed change in the congregation. It is important to note that when one type of intervention did not work, another was attempted with more success.

After a year and a half, the pastor who followed me is still at the church in the study. We both outlasted previous pastors by a year, and he is planning to stay longer.¹⁶ That is a great improvement in a system

what previously attempted to solve its problems by bringing in someone new each year. In discussions with that pastor, I have found that he is able to relate well to people from both sides of the congregation, and there seems to be a reduced stress level within the congregation when compared to previous years. Several younger members of the church are in leadership positions on committees, and are taking an active part in the congregation. These new leaders are some of the same people who talked about not coming to church two years ago because they were frustrated with the church did not like Mrs. O's behavior.

Since there was a change in pastors as well as strategic interventions used within a short period of time, there are too many variables of change to attribute all change to the approach of strategic family therapy. However, it is also important to note that the interventions were an important part of what transpired in the church two years ago when some positive restructuring occurred.

Summary

Two types of interventions were attempted in this church congregation to solve specific problems. The first was a transgenerational problem of loyalty and connectedness to Rev. H, the founding pastor who was no longer with the church, which made the congregation unable to move ahead. In order to differentiate from the past, a celebration in honor of the former pastor was planned and held. The event was successful in separating the congregation from unrealistic expectations for the present based on past traditions and events.

A strategic approach to a specific problem was the second intervention attempted. Working with the identified patient was not successful, so the strategy was shifted to making a very small change

with the suport of a member of the congregation who had expressed a desire for change. This approach resulted in some restructuring within the congregation, which in turn resulted in a greater degree of differentiation, a lower level of stress within the system, and an increased number of behavioral options for many members. The final outcome of the use of strategic interventions seemed to be extremely positive for the pastor and the congregation.

Notes
Chapter 5

1. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 197.
2. Friedman, 24.
3. Brown and Christensen, 116.
4. Rev. H, personal interview, fall 1987.
5. Friedman, 27.
6. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy, 197.
7. Brown and Christensen, 137.
8. Friedman.
9. Haley, Problem-Solving Therapy.
10. Kennon L. Callahan, statement made in workshop "Twelve Keys to an Effective Church", Los Angeles District, United Methodist Church, spring 1988.
11. Friedman, 27-31.
12. Friedman, 23.
13. Friedman, 38.
14. Brown and Christensen, 111-12.
15. Lemuel Oxley, telephone interview, 5 Feb., 1991.
16. Oxley, telephone interview.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

Implications for Use in the Local Church

The systems approach to family therapy seems to provide a very effective overall framework with which to approach ministry in the local church. There are enough schools within the systems approach so that several options are available when the pastor approaches any given problem or situation in the congregational setting. In this study, one church congregation was analyzed from two therapeutic approaches: transgenerational family therapy and strategic family therapy. Both seemed effective, and each provided a framework which helped to clarify and ease a problem situation.

Although the long-range effectiveness of the application of the systems approach to family therapy needs to be examined, this study points to effective use of systems techniques for a pastor in the local church.

Perhaps the greatest asset for the pastor using the systems approach is in reformulating the way one thinks about the church. The systems approach is the result of a major revision of thinking about the nuclear family which points the way to reframing how we think about and approach all our social structures and systems.

Whether or not attempted interventions provide long-term change, using concepts of the systems approach to family therapy can enlarge our

own thinking, giving increased options for problem solving and finding creative possibilities for ministry. Concepts such as differentiation of the self, conceiving relationships as fluid triangles, approaching people in terms of their function and position within the system rather than as autonomous individuals, and interconnection of the past and present are extremely helpful when sorting out the complex relationships operational within a large system like the church.

The relationship of the pastor to the congregation also takes on a new meaning within the systems approach. The pastor is differentiated from the congregation, that is, he or she is involved in the congregation, yet removed enough to be able to analyze and lead. Leadership may involve direct confrontation, challenge to existing norms, or other confrontive or directive behavior. The pastor actually functions within the congregation as spiritual leader/therapist.

Other Implications

Other implications for research concern the concept of the whole and how all matter in the universe might be interrelated on an even larger scale than human beings related within a large group or organization. In The Dancing WuLi Masters,¹ a book about the new physics written for the lay person, phenomenon such as the interrelatedness of seemingly unrelated subatomic particles across empty space is explained. This is an exciting concept and seems to be as pertinent to the study of the systems theory as breakthroughs in computers and communication systems is the new physics.

This concept of interrelationships is no longer new, but the implications are yet to be integrated into our thought processes and conceptual thinking. How remarkable it would be if, in fact, all living

matter does influence all other living matter, all living things are interrelated, and that our own energy is connected with the energies of all that exists! How much we are influenced and how much freedom the individual has within those relationships needs to be explored, but the implication is that matter itself is one large system, infinitely complex, and infinitely interrelated. These interrelationships are fluid and alive, able to respond to one another.

This concept of relationship has implications for one to one relationships within a system such as the church, as well as implications for the created order. We humans seem to care much more carefully for those beings and things to which we are related, and opening our perception to complete interrelatedness would increase the chance that we would learn to be better stewards of the planet, as well as learning how to live in peace with our fellow humans and the creation. This is the peace of Christ, the peace which passes all understanding.

This perspective of matter also has implications for mystical relationships. Mystics have repeatedly taught the unity of all living things, and now we are close to having scientific proof that they have been right all along. The mystical union between Christ and the creation may have its basis in these relationships! Human beings can no longer think of themselves as isolated or able to make decisions that don't affect other people, for if all matter is related on the sub-atomic level, there is nothing we do that does not influence other matter. If all matter is part of this large, cosmological system, then all decisions about all human beings, and all decisions concerning the environment and ecology of the planet, are important for all other

living things. This leaves little in our environment that we can take lightly or fritter away, for it means that everything else (all that affects other matter) may be affecting our own being, right at this very moment, just as we are affecting our surroundings.

Summary

The systems approach to marriage and family counseling is an extremely useful concept for any person working with a group of people, and is directly applicable to the work of the pastor in a local church. The value of using this approach is that it provides a perspective within which the church organization can be analyzed for needed change without the pastor getting involved in unnecessary conflict. The systems approach also introduces the concept of function within the organization as more important than individual personality when problem solving becomes necessary. The individual is still important, but the role he or she plays within the church community is also important and is often ignored. Here, that role, or function, and the interrelationships between people and groups, form the basis for interventions when the system is dysfunctional. In this study, intergenerational relationships as well as relationships in the present were important in analyzing the congregation, again providing a basis for positive intervention.

When the pastor works with the church using the above perspective, every situation, from the most difficult to the most pleasant, can be dealt with in a positive manner. The theory also has broad implications for how we view our world, and how we relate to the created order, the cosmos.

Notes

Chapter 6

1. Gary Zukav, The Dancing WuLi Masters (New York: Bantam, 1984).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works Cited

- Bennett, Michael J. "Brief Psychotherapy and Adult Development." Psychotherapy 21 (Summer 1984): 171-77.
- Brown, Joseph H., and Dana N. Christensen. Family Therapy: Theory and Practice. Monterey, Calif.: Brooks/Cole, 1986.
- Callahan, Kennon L. Twelve Keys to an Effective Church. New York: Harper & Row, 1983.
- . Seminar Presentation based on Twelve Keys to an Effective Church. Los Angeles: Spring 1987.
- Compton, Vivian. Statement made in church. 1987.
- Conklin, Faith. Meditation given at a meeting of the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, Southern California and Pacific Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, January 1990.
- Corey, Gerald, Marianne Schneider Corey and Patrick Callanan. Issues and Ethics in the Helping Professions. 2nd ed. Monterey, Calif.: Brooks/Cole, 1984.
- Fisch, Richard, John H. Weakland and Lynn Segal. The Tactics of Change: Doing Therapy Briefly. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1983.
- Friedman, Edwin H. Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue. New York: Guilford Press, 1985.
- Haley, Jay. Ordeal Therapy. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1985.
- . Problem-Solving Therapy. New York: Harper & Row, 1976.
- . Uncommon Therapy. New York: Norton, 1973.
- Hoffman, John C. Ethical Confrontation in Counseling. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
- Massey, Floyd Jr.. Telephone interview. 7 Feb. 1991.
- Massey, Floyd Jr., and Samuel Berry McKinney. Church Administration in the Black Perspective. Valley Forge: Judson, 1976.

Oxley, Lemuel. Telephone interview. 5 Feb. 1991.

Rawls, John. "Two Concepts of Rules." Philosophical Review 64 (1955): 3-32. Reprinted as "Rule-Utilitarianism" in Value and Obligation: Systematic Readings in Ethics. Ed. Richard B. Brandt. New York: Harcourt, 1961. 230-238.

Satir, Virginia, James Stachowiak and Harvey A. Taschman. Helping Families to Change. New York: Aronson, 1975.

Thielicke, Helmut. Theological Ethics. 3 vols. Ed. William H. Lazareth. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979.

Watzlawick, Paul, John H. Weakland, and Richard Fisch. Change: Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution. New York: Norton, 1974.

Weakland, John H., et al. "Brief Therapy: Focused Problem Resolution." Family Process 13 (June 1974): 141-68.

Zukav, Gary. The Dancing WuLi Masters. New York: Bantam, 1984.

Works Consulted

Browning, Don S. The Moral Context of Pastoral Care. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976.

Haley, Jay. The Power Tactics of Jesus Christ. New York: Grossman, 1969.

Leas, Speed, and Paul Kittlaus. Church Fights: Managing Conflict in the Local Church. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973.

Nelson, Hart M., Raytha L. Yokley, and Anne K. Nelsen, eds. The Black Church in America. New York: Basic Books, 1971.

Thurman, Howard. The Creative Encounter. Richmond, Va.: Friends United, 1954.

---. Disciplines of the Spirit. 1963. Reprint. Richmond, Ind.: Friends United Press, 1977.